

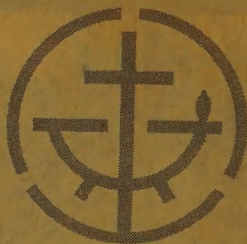
School of Theology at Claremont



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LECTURES ON PREACHING.
THIRD SERIES.

H. W. Beecher



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YALE

LECTURES ON PREACHING.

BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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DELIVERED BEFORE THE THEOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT OF YALE
COLLEGE, NEW HAVEN, CONN., IN THE REGULAR COURSE
OF THE "LYMAN BEECHER LECTURESHIP
ON PREACHING."

FROM PHONOGRAPHIC REPORTS

By T. J. ELLINWOOD.

Third Series.



NEW YORK:
J. B. FORD AND COMPANY.
1874.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1874,
BY J. B. FORD AND COMPANY,
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UNIVERSITY PRESS: WELCH, BIGELOW, & Co.,
CAMBRIDGE.

THEOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT, YALE COLLEGE,
March 19, 1874.

REV. HENRY WARD BEECHER.

DEAR SIR, — At the close of your third course of lectures on the Sage Foundation, we take pleasure in expressing to you our high appreciation of their value, and in testifying to the deep interest with which they have been heard by the large and cultivated audience to which they have been addressed.

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We remain, dear sir,

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LECTURES ON PREACHING.

I.

THE PREACHER'S BOOK.

February 11, 1874.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

MEEET you again, gentlemen, with mingled pleasure and pain: pleasure, because I perceive many familiar faces, and because in a general way it is pleasant to perform the tasks that are allotted to me; pain, because I regard the course of lectures on which I am entering this winter as by far the most difficult of all that I have been called to deliver. It will take me over the very line where the theological storm has raged through every age; for theology is a perpetual witness of the truth of the Lord's saying. Said he, "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword"; and so he sent theologians and ecclesiastics! And, as you are aware, it is not an easy thing to be interjected upon a regular course like this, not in consultation with the stated teachers; not knowing what grounds they are laying out for you, what discriminations they are making, what advices they are giving.

Certainly, it would be painful for me to stand in your midst, and find myself traversing that which is regarded by your teachers as sound and very necessary in the equipment of ministers for the field. I do not much feel that I shall traverse the substantial facts that underlie all theology; and yet, I have from the very beginning of my ministry worked from the standpoint of a different philosophy from that which has been employed in times past, and according to a different method; so that, even while feeling after the same great truths which others are seeking for, I may place them in lights which make them apparently antagonistic, in a doctrinal form, to those that were held by the fathers, or are held by my brethren in the ministry. On such grounds, therefore, I might be considered "unsound," and not worthy to be called an orthodox man. And yet, in regard to the great elements of human nature, of the divine nature, of the essential principles of moral government, and its ends and aims, and of the means employed in the great scheme of salvation through Jesus Christ, I hold myself to be perfectly sound, and, if anything, *sounder than other folks!*

So it really is a kind of vacillation, rather than anxiety, that I feel in speaking to you, as I shall, in respect to the nature of man as universally sinful, but susceptible of development out of animal conditions into spiritual conditions; and in respect to the other main doctrines of your belief. For as to the reality and glory of a personal God, revealed to us in the New Testament, in three persons,—in other words, the doctrine of the Trinity; the ever-blessed truth of the

divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; the history of his life-work, constituting substantially an atonement for the sins of the world; the doctrine of the power of the Holy Ghost, sent forth from God, by which man, who needs to be born out of natural life into spiritual life, is regenerated by the development in him of all-controlling Christian sentiments,—a new will and new spiritual power; the essential elements of faith and hope; the great truths of two-world life and immortality,—in regard to all these great, substantial, and underlying facts, I suppose I stand with the good men who have lived since the day that Paul left the earth; and I hold them not merely in curiosity, nor from a love of their logical affinities and their structural fitness, but as the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation.

It is my errand among you now to try to show you how you may do by the great truths of theology that which Paul said he did, namely, use them as God's wisdom and God's power for the *salvation of men*,—their salvation, through a change into a salvable disposition, so that they may be made perfect men in Christ Jesus. And if, while doing this, in presenting the different ways in which doctrines can be held and used, I should vary from the ordinary modes of teaching, and if many of you think the variation is a dangerous one, all I can say is this: that there is an advantage in seeing things in different lights, and that there will be twelve months in which the professorial hoe can cut up the weeds that I shall have sown during my brief six weeks of lecturing. So that, if I make errors, and they are the occasion of bringing out the truth more strongly than it otherwise would have been brought out, and with

greater interest on your part, I am willing to be refuted and set at naught in order that you may be made stronger, wiser, and better ministers.

SOURCES OF TRUTH.

Before I enter upon the main theme of this course of lectures, namely, Functional Theology, as distinguished from Structural Theology, — Christian doctrines, as they are related, not to the building up of a system, but to the development of the living character, — it is proper to consider the sources whence the pulpit is to derive the great truths which it employs in its work upon the souls of men.

SCIENCE.

These are the more to be considered because we have certainly come to a time in which the educated mind is tending to fall off from the teachings of the pulpit. I do not know how far, in the country districts and quieter towns, the educated feeling has let go of religion, as it has been hitherto taught in the churches ; but I am confident that in our large cities and centers, and particularly in circles of artists, of scientists, and of literary men, there is an essential unclasping of the public mind in this respect ; and we hear thousands saying, "The pulpit has had its day ; these old-fashioned doctrines have no more juice in them ; and, according to the great principle of evolution, we have so far grown that at last the whole world is becoming man's text-book, and the minister ought to preach to his people the elements of sound physical life and health, the great sociological laws, the great civil laws,

and the great laws of political economy." In short, there are many men who would tell you that now, in the light that has been growing through the ages, the time has come in which Science is to be the savior of the world, that the minister should be its instrument, and that the pulpit should be the place where it is taught, in its relations to life and duty.

Far be it from me to undervalue science, which I believe to be one of the revelations of God in this world. The heavens declare his glory, and the earth shows his hand-work; and if rightly understood, and reverently observed, they lead us back to God: but physical science has not in it the power to develop spirituality in man. When taught only upon this lower plane of knowledge, — namely, the knowledge which they can see, and hear, and smell, and taste, and handle, — men can never become spiritual. They may have some slight impetus through the imagination in that direction, — for even scientists are beginning to say that in science there must be a sphere for the imagination; but those profounder depths of man, out of which come self-abnegation and sublime enthusiasm, those powers which lead a man to sacrifice himself, to live joyfully without joy, to have bread without wheat, to have light without vision, to be powerful by the world that is unseen and the God that is invisible, to have a life supreme, dominating over other lives, — these you can never find on the plane of mere sensuous knowledge. As an auxiliary, material science is invaluable; but it touches man only in the lower sphere of life, and never exalts him into that higher realm upon which he may enter as a Christian.

THE CHURCH.

It is thought by others that our knowledge should be drawn chiefly from the revelation of God through his Church; and that in the Church, in its economies, in its creeds, and especially in its sacraments, we have elements of power and of education which are all-sufficient. And under these impressions, many turn themselves to the Church. Nor do I wonder, altogether, that they should do so; for there is a certain sort of weary men, who will tell you that they find *rest* in the Church.

I had the pleasure of a correspondence with certain ladies who had gone into a convent of the Roman Catholic Church, and who were amiably desirous that I also should become a true Christian. The point which they continually made with me was that they never found any rest until they went into the Church, but that there they found it. And this fact is the very argument which I employ to show that the external church is a false church. For I observe that when water is pure and sweet, it is always moving: here it is leaping down the mountain-side; there it is sliding smoothly, though only for a while, through the level stretches of the meadows; yonder it is plunging again down the descent, foaming, and cleansing itself by foaming, in the air; and when at last it reaches the deep pool, it comes to where the mud settles, slime thickens, scum gathers, and spores breed. In stagnant pools are to be found, it is true, rest and quiet; but death also is to be found there.

I hold that in this world it was not designed that

men should rest. I hold that exercise, or, in other words, excitement, is the indispensable condition of evolution or education; and that neither the outward world nor the church world was ever designed of God to be constructed so that a man should find things as he wants them, all thought out for him, rules being laid down for every part of his life, duties being prescribed for every hour of the day, and doctrines being made so clear to him that he can no more mistake them than the mineralogist can mistake the facets and angles of a crystal; so that all that a receptive man has to do is to go into the Church, and count the things which are to be done, and do them in their order. It is true that there is little to do under such circumstances. There are less tasks, and there are fewer responsibilities. There is a sort of attraction in church life, to many natures, on these accounts. But it is not in any such way that God has ever educated the race, and it is not in any such way that the race will ever be educated. And yet, as auxiliaries to the true method, I recognize the benefits of church orders and church institutions, and especially in the claim of the Roman Catholic Church, and of the Hierarchy generally, do I see a certain element of beauty which Protestants do not like to recognize.

That God does present the truth to men through the Church I believe; for I hold the Church to be the body of earnest Christian-living, right-thinking men in every age. It is stating the simplest thing in the world to say that our knowledge is the result of the experience of the true men who have lived in the past, clear down to our time; and that the truth is to be learned, not in an organic church, not on account of the fact that there

is a boundary of church lines and beliefs, but for the reason that it is a part of the evolution which God carries on in society at large, of which the Church may partake, but which the Church has no right to arrogate to itself. And as between a dead record, an Egyptian hieroglyph on a stone or column, a statement written out on papyrus, or printed, — a statement that is just so long, and just so broad, and that cannot be changed one whit, — as between this and the theory that the truth is revealed by the Spirit in the *living moral consciousness of God's people*, I would incomparably rather have the latter.

THE BIBLE.

Therefore I come to the ground that the sources of truth are to be found in the Word of God, as it is held, felt, and interpreted by the living reason and moral consciousness of Christian men, — the Word of God, not as a dead record, but as interpreted by vital souls, with such auxiliaries as they can receive, namely, the development of the natural world, the disclosures of Divine Providence, the experiences of good men, and the illumination of the Holy Ghost.

A Bible alone is nothing. A Bible is what the man is who stands behind it, — a book of hieroglyphics, if he be nothing but a spiritual Champollion; a book of rituals, if he be nothing but a curiosity-monger, or an ingenious framer of odds and ends of things; and a valuable guide, full of truth and full of benefit for mankind, if he be a great soul filled with living thought. What the Bible is, is shown in the men who use it. It is not in the letter that the Word of God has power,

but in the *spirit*; and the living man is that spirit; and as far as he, using the Word of God, takes it up into himself, and bears it out to others, so far he is the Bible for the time being. And in your ministry this vitalized Bible is the main source of the power which you are to wield as Christian preachers.

ITS AIM, — SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF MAN.

Let me speak some words more, then, in respect to the Bible, which is the fountain whence we must all of us draw. And in the first place I wish to say that we find in this book (and nowhere else that I know of, except where it has exerted its influence) the aim to *unfold mankind by a moral power which is developed within them.*

There have been educating forces of various kinds in existence since the world began; but I know of no other source besides the sacred Canon that has so consistently poured forth such a stream of influence. From the earliest of the records, without disconnection, and without its being ostentatiously proclaimed, but in reality, down to the last letter of the last book, the Holy Scriptures have one genius, namely, the exertion of a power for the development of men, not as animals, nor even as social creatures, but as moral beings, possessing the germs of the Divine nature, and to be developed by the infusion of the Divine Spirit upon their higher faculties. That truth dawned in the earliest ages. It was taught by the prophets, it appeared in the most disastrous periods of Jewish history again and again, leading to temporary reformatations; it broke out more potently and more gloriously in the New

Testament dispensation ; and to the preaching of it by the Apostles during the last days of that epoch there has been no parallel, that I know of. So, the genius of the Bible is the development of man into a spiritual creature.

When men tell me, therefore, that the Bible is a collection of books (or a "clutter" of books, as they are sometimes pleased to call it), written in different ages, in different languages, from different standpoints, and by different men, and that there are a thousand discrepancies in it, I say that there is one spinal cord which runs through it from the beginning to the end, but of the importance, the power, and the glory of which the world has been largely unconscious, — namely, the development, by education, of the essential nature of man, his true nature, out of the animal, and out of the lower forms of society-life, into the higher spiritual form. The Bible is instinct with that element, and glows with it all the way through. Nowhere else can you find such inexhaustible stores in that direction as in the Word of God.

ITS TENDER SYMPATHY.

Then, it is a book which overflows with sympathy for men. We like those who like us, and what thank have we ? We salute those who salute us, and what thank have we ? Kings always like kings, especially when they have got them under ; philosophers are apt to think well of philosophers ; rich men think well of rich men ; friends think well of friends ; connections think well of kindred ; men love to praise men of their own nation. But here, in the midst of the history of

rude selfishness and class-instincts and personal preferences, we have a book, coming to us in fragments, little by little accumulating, which all through, from beginning to end, looks at man in the most sympathetic and tender relations, not because of agreeable or harmonious qualities, but on account of his *imperfections*, just as a mother looks at the cradle. She looks at the cradle, not on account of what the child says, — it does not talk; not on account of what the child does, — it does nothing; nor does she look at the child altogether on account of what it is to be: she looks at it on account of its weakness and helplessness, and its need of her fidelity and love and care. Now, in the Word of God we have the mother-instinct all the way through, — a tender sympathy for man, as poor, as weak, as ignorant, as degraded, as sinful, as damnable. *Because* he is so sinful the Bible has infinite compassion upon him. It breathes this spirit toward him in all its relations, from beginning to end.

Men go back to the Old Testament, questioning and searching, to ascertain whether there is a revelation of the Messiah; and of the atonement; and of the divine nature; or whether there are symbols of these things: but I go so far as to say that the very breath of the Old Testament is the same breath that prayed, dying, on Calvary; and that the bosom that gives nutriment in the New Testament is the same bosom that fed God's people in the Old Testament, both of them being instinct with sympathy for men, not because they have genius, because they have attained to wealth and position, because they are strong and successful; but because they are poor and needy.

Now, when you consider that this book has come up from barbaric ages, amid warring thrones and bloody-footed armies, the world groaning and travailing with cruelties everywhere, and men, like waste material, like mud in the streets, being trampled under foot by power; when you consider that through dark periods of the world this book came up, little by little, breathing the spirit of humanity all the time, — do you tell me that it was an accident, and that I need those exterior and scholastic arguments for its divinity which men seem to think will affirm it? No, verily!

ITS ADAPTEDNESS TO COMMON LIFE.

Then I find another thing, namely, that it is a book which is pitched to the key of common life, and not to an artificial key. Many a man wishes that the Bible had not been, in some respects, just what it is. Many people wish that the Bible produced more sudden and startling sensation, or that it constantly had tremendous strokes in it, which should overawe the minds of men, or fascinate their imaginations. Many persons want the Bible to act on men as Sinai acted on the common people who were at its base; and if it had acted on them thus, they would have been affected about as the Israelites were, who, hearing the voice of the thunder and worshiping God one day, danced around a calf the next.

Now I find, in going through the Bible, scarcely a single element which when it was written was not familiar to the minds of the common people. In other words, it took its keynote from those great qualities which are common to humanity, and addressed itself to

them. In every age, and in all nations, men are very much alike ; the great underlying element of humanity is the same in all race-stocks. Men are said to have sprung from five primitive stocks. I believe that the revered Agassiz and others have thought that the race proceeded from twenty different stocks. I do not know about that ; but of this I am sure, that if they did start from twenty different stocks, they all had the same mold ; because it is beyond all conception or belief, it is out of the question, that there should have been five, or ten, or fifteen, or twenty variations of nature ; that there should have been numerous differentiations resulting in man, and that these differentiations should have produced men so exactly alike ; that the basilar faculties, and the perceptive faculties, and the reflective faculties should have been so identical in all the race that one man could understand another, and that men of different stocks could reason with each other. Such a thing would be an impossibility.

What I say is, that in the one comprehensive race, in all the minor races included in it, there are certain underlying particulars which are the same ; and the word of God addresses itself to them. To be sure, we have in it some philosophical language, but what was philosophy in those days of the world when the Bible was constructed ? Solomon, it is true, had some time (aside from his domestic cares) in which to philosophize ; but compare the philosophy of President Porter with the proverbs of Solomon. Compare Cousin's writings, compare Sir William Hamilton's writings, compare the writings of any modern master of philosophy, with the philosophy of the olden time. Then,

philosophy was a collection of proverbs. It was the wisdom of the people reduced to its narrowest, simplest, and most striking form ; so that nowhere in the Old Testament is there a large generic view of the moral government of God over this world. There is nowhere in the early writings of the Bible any systematic teaching in respect to human nature.

In our day men wonder at Bishop Butler's writings, and speak of him as the originator, in his time, of new schools, which, as it were, sprang from his loins. I do not undertake to say that he taught the presence of that same divine creative genius in the natural world which is pointed out all the way through the Bible, and in harmony with which the Bible itself is constructed ; but although he did not say expressly what he thought, beyond a question he did think that the Bible was the highest and the sublimest part of the natural world, and that it was natural, not in the sense in which we speak of nature as degraded, but in the sense that it belonged to that unitary work in which things physical, things social, things intellectual, and things moral are intersphering and moving together. Without a doubt it was his belief that the creation of God's Word is part and parcel of the whole advancement which is taking place in mankind.

ITS WEALTH OF MATERIAL.

In the natural world we never find tools ready made, we never find implements constructed for our use, we never find machines, varied and complicated, with which to carry on the processes of life ; but we find iron in the earth, out of which to make these things.

We never find, in the natural world, knives and lancets to our hands ; but we find there the ore out of which steel is made for their manufacture. In the natural world we find the raw material for the supply of our physical wants ; and it is our business to take this raw material and work it up.

Now, the Word of God is filled full of material for philosophy, but there is no philosophy in it. It is full of material for constructing a theory of human life, but there is no theory of human life in it. It is full of material for ethics, but there is no system of ethics laid down in it. It does not contain a prescribed system. On the same principle that it is said to a man in the natural world, "Work or starve, dig or go without iron," it is said to him in the word of God, "There is nothing prepared for you here." The Bible is a great book stored with much that is beautiful and valuable, and which men can gain by digging and working it, as ore from a mine, but in no other way.

The Bible, then, while it is in analogy with the development of God's providence in every other sphere, has this advantage, that it is a book which aims at the level of every man's understanding. Out of it can be formed rules and schemes for the conduct of life, as from the wool on a sheep's back you can form a garment. You can shear the wool ; then with deft fingers on the wheel, you can draw the thread out a thousand times longer than it grew ; then you can twist it and dye it with colors that it never had before ; then you can put it into the loom, whose shuttles swing back and forth almost like intelligent messengers, and make the fabric ; and then you can fashion it into a garment.

This garment did not grow on the sheep's back ; but all the way along it has been in the workshop of the human brain. It was man that made it, although the material out of which it was made came from the sheep.

Now, what worlds of thought there have been ! What vast evolutions there have been in the realm of mind ! What disclosures there have been in the higher spheres of knowledge ! How illimitable has been the scope of living experience ! What prophecies there have been ! How much has been set forth in poetry ! What historical records have been made ! In ten thousand forms there have been arguments and teachings in schools and churches. There have been philosophies multitudinous and multifarious. Of statistics there has been no end. Vast has been the outcome of those things. And the germs of them all were and are in the Bible. Germs so simple are they, that the plainest man, that even a child, could understand them.

The Bible, therefore, is a book for men, and for men that are low down in the scale, — for to this day nine tenths of the inhabitants of the globe are but children, or are less intelligent than children among us. So that the great work of the Bible in the world has begun, but not ended. It was made to meet the wants of common men, or men less than common ; it is in sympathy with them ; it is formed out of material which can be shaped to their need ; and its methods are within their easy reach.

You think that when you preach you must preach so as to touch the top heads in your congregation. Touch the bottom and you will be sure to touch the

top. He that puts a jackscrew under the roof is not going to raise the whole building; but he who puts a jackscrew under the sills of a building, and raises them up, will, I think, take up everything that is above them. And in preaching, the man who is in dead earnest, who is inflamed by divine love, and who preaches so that the lowest and poorest of his congregation understand him and are stirred by what he says, and are lifted up by the power of the truth as he presents it, — does he not lift everybody else up too?

THE VALUE OF ITS WASTE MATTER.

I want to say another thing about the Bible; for I am held to be so erratic on many subjects, that I must make my calling and election sure where I can!

I glory in its chaff and straw. People ask me, frequently, "Is there not a great deal in the Bible that is useless?" Yes, there is, — commentators, for instance, often! "But," say they, "are there not a great many histories, and stories, and such like things, that could be purged out from the Bible with great advantage?" Well, I should like to know what you would do for wheat if you had the same contempt for straw in April and May that you have in July and August. What is your wheat in the spring? A little sucking babe. What is your straw then? A full-breasted mother feeding the wheat. What is the chaff but the bosom of the plant? It is the mother's arm around it, protecting it and carrying it. "It is nothing but chaff and straw," men say; but, I tell you, the farmer talks about chaff and straw one way in spring and another way in autumn.

Now, since the Word of God was gradually constructed; since it was upbuilt through two thousand years; since its method was the development of truth through experience, through a revelation of God by the experience of holy men; one thing coming out by mistake, another thing coming out by forethought; some virtues being made clearer by corresponding vices, the bitterness of which taught men the right way, broken laws teaching men where laws should be infrangible; since all parts of the Word of God have been applied as they were wrought out, all along, in this way, are not these old wrecks, these broken commandments, these mistakes and stumblings, invaluable in the history of the evolution of the moral sense of mankind? Is it for us, because the record of these things remains in history, to scoff and scorn them? I honor the chaff and the straw. I like to see where the truths of the Bible got their effulgence; where their roots were; where they grew; what took care of them; what their primitive forms were.

We have some analogies to these things in the present. You do not need to go four thousand years back to see antiquity. It is right under our feet, and everywhere about us. We see it where men are living squalid, like savages. Antiquity is in our very midst. Much that the Bible contains you may not want in elegant leisure; you may not want it in poetical ease; you may not want it in philosophical enjoyment; there may be circumstances in this later civilization, in which you do not want it — or think you do not: but it is a book that mankind need; it is a book for mankind; it is a book of mankind; and there is no greater mistake that

men are making than the criticising the Bible from their own selfish standpoint; do not say of any part of the Bible, "I do not want this, and therefore nobody wants it."

ITS HARMONY WITH ADVANCING TRUTH.

Let me only hint at one other thing. You know that we are all of us under very great alarm, just now, because Mr. Darwin is going to take away Christianity; and it is proper that all of us who are orthodox should shake our heads wisely when his name is mentioned, or when his philosophy is spoken of. Far be it from me, therefore, to say anything in favor of Mr. Darwin! But he has read his Bible, evidently, and has taken many ideas from Paul; for I find that Paul's theory of the natural man, and Mr. Darwin's theory of the animal man, are very near together; and that the whole line of apostolic thought in regard to the inner man and the outer man has a strange resemblance to the thought which Mr. Darwin is feeling after. You will observe that Paul went so far as to almost deny his own personality, as an animal. He says, "There is a law of the flesh, there is a beast-law, in me, and there is also in me a law of the spirit, a God-law; and these two laws are not reconciled. The animal runs away with me every day: I hold on, but he runs away with me; and as not the animal, but the higher spiritual man is I, it is not I that sin, but the animal. I dwell in a body that sins. Here is an inner man and an outer man; an upper man and an under man; a spiritual man and an animal man." This idea runs all the way through Paul's epistles. Not only so,

but all the way through the Bible there is a representation of man as being a creature of time, a creature with a lower nature, but with the germs of a higher nature in him, which is developing slowly toward the highest elevation that it is capable of reaching; it is only when this higher nature is developed so that the light of God's soul is struck through it, and it is in affinity with the Divine, that the man is an unfolded child of God. And he cannot get the power of such development until he grows in the sunshine of God's own soul; until the mind and will and heart of God touch his mind and will and heart.

But above all and beyond all this philosophy, physical or metaphysical, that can be found in its germ-forms in the Bible, is that representation which is made of the ideal God. By *the ideal God* I do not mean any fictitious and poetic conception of God; I mean that view of God which we frame by the best effort of our understanding, with all our imagination working in the great invisible moral realm.

THE DIVINE STRENGTH OF ITS INFANCY.

I know that truth is slow in developing. If you were to find a perfect alphabet in a savage's hut, you would say that it was brought there. If it could be shown that a savage had invented a new language, and was using it, it would be considered an anomaly. It would be so different from the ordinary experience of men in all time, that no man would believe it.

Nothing impresses me more than to go back and see how the patriarchs lived. Abraham, a respectable old sheikh of the desert, hardly ever said or did anything

worth remembering. He was powerless, comparatively speaking. Isaac was a very mild shadow of his father. Jacob was a substantial man, to be sure; he was politic and diplomatic; he was a good manager, — a very excellent manager. And while I look upon the characters of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, I cannot understand how they could have been so dear to the Jews. Measuring by the ordinary ideas of our time, we cannot see what great thoughts or great developments ever came out of their brains; though out of their experience grew that helpful conception of God as the defense and the recompense of the faithful, — “I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.” And then, take that declaration of God to Moses in the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus. I think the conception there given, where God reveals his moral nature to Moses, at his supplication, — the majesty of it, the fullness of it, the quality of it, the proportion of it, and the drift of it, — is something more than sublime. There is nothing in the New Testament that surpasses it. The New Testament indeed may be said to be but a paraphrase of it.

Now, how can you account for the fact that there stands that magnificent conception of Jehovah, which was revealed to Moses in the beginning, — that same conception which crops out again and again in the prophets, and all the way down through the Scriptures, with more and more clearness until the time of Jesus Christ, when in him we had the full manifestation of God?

Remember that this was in a dynastic age. Remember that God gave out his life clearly in an age when

men were but little above the animals, and when the senses gave law and ethics to the world.

THE DIVINE IDEA OF DIVINITY.

And what is the conception of God which runs through the Old Testament, and all the way down? Compare it with the Grecian conception of him, and then with the Roman, which was subsequent to it. Compare it with the Assyrian notion of the Divine nature. Compare it with all the collateral ideas of God which existed. Not that there are not correct and noble points, here and there, in all mythologies and religions; but take the conceptions of Jehovah and of Jesus which we find in the New Testament,—what are they? They are not simply conceptions of power: they are essentially conceptions of *character*. And more than that, they are conceptions of character in the relations of love to mankind; and not in the relations of love alone, but in the relations of self-sacrifice as well. Long before these ideas ever appeared in philosophy or in poetry, there was lifted up in the early ages a sublime idea of God as one who carried the world in his arms, as a mother carries her child in her bosom. This idea grew stronger and stronger, until the Saviour in glory bowed his head and came down to earth, and was not ashamed to be called a man and a brother, and declared that he came not to destroy, but to save; that he came to give life, not to take life; that he came to show that greatness was service rendered, and not service accepted. He washed his disciples' feet, and said, "I, your Lord, have done this,"—how? why?—"to teach you what you should

do; to teach you what is the rule of moral life and character; to teach you what is mercy; to teach you what is the nature of the Godhead; to teach you that it is not will, not power, not control, not sovereignty, but that it is *service*. The Divine idea is that of the greater serving the less; of the stronger serving the weaker; of the richer serving the poorer; of the better serving those that are less good. It is the eternal nature of God to give himself for men, that they may be lifted up out of their lowness and meagerness unto him. Now, this view is to be found regnant all through the Bible, from beginning to end; and it is to be found nowhere else, that I know of, as it is in that book. It has been hinted at in sermons and essays and all manner of tractates, but it is much more largely developed in the Word of God than it has ever been out of it. It is the slowest and last thing for men to learn.

I do not understand this to be the idea of Calvinism and Augustinianism. I hold Calvinism to teach the sovereignty of absolute will and wisdom. Every man is a Calvinist, no matter what church he belongs to, who has a great deal of will, and thinks it ought to dominate! Calvinism illustrates the monarchical idea rather than the idea of fatherhood. Men have represented God as being sovereign. It is said that he made all things, and that because he made them he has a right to do just as he pleases with them. It is claimed that, having created men, he has a right to raise up some and dash down others. When applied to the will of God as dealing with matter, I assent to this; but when applied to the Divine will as dealing

with the destinies of men, not only in time, but throughout eternity, I protest against it. I say that the God of Calvinism is not the God of Calvary. To teach that God, because he is the greatest, and has the most wisdom, and is the most powerful, has a right to rule arbitrarily, is contrary to the teaching of the Gospel. My Lord Jesus Christ, when he washed the disciples' feet, taught that he who would be most like God should be willing to do the lowest services, and to do them to the poorest and most degraded of his fellow-men. *That* is the mark of divinity! I find this nowhere so forcibly and wondrously illustrated as in the New Testament.

GREAT PREACHERS.

The Bible is the preacher's book, not only because of these things, but because in its latter stages you have the pattern preachers portrayed. Paul, for instance, I consider the greatest of preachers. He was a man who used his whole life-force in behalf of his fellows, to imbue them with the truth, and with motives for seeking a higher development and striving after salvation. He was a man who put all the resources of his genius at the disposal of those who were about him. He was unmatched in Jewish education. He had an extraordinary wealth of tenderness. Though he had great susceptibility and great pride, yet he carried himself with great humility among the discordant elements which surrounded him. Next to Christ, I like to look at this man Paul, and contemplate his character and his work. Indeed, he walked almost a Christ among men. How various were his talents! How admirable

was his employment of them! What a similarity there was between his sensibility and tenderness, and the simplicity and sweetness and gentleness and quiet majesty of Christ. Paul, being proud, was sensitive to all men's thoughts, so that, as he declared, he *died daily*. And he often refers to himself in his writings. There is not a letter of his that does not indicate his consciousness of what he suffered, or felt, or did; *Ego*, blessed *Ego*,—made blessed everywhere throughout his writings! This was the man who was willing to spend and be spent. What is more matchless than this declaration?—

“I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.”

This man, who knew nothing but to throw a blaze of light upon the cold and hard and selfish natures about him; this man, who came to men in the dark Roman Empire as May winds and summer breezes come to unlock the frozen soil everywhere, and to bring warmth to vegetation,—this noble man is the model of preachers; and whoever acquires his spirit has his armory full, needs no other weapons, and is complete in his equipment.

THE ESTABLISHED AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE.

There is one other fact in respect to the Bible, of which I desire to speak, namely, that happily it has been so long in the world, and so much taught, that it is an authority now among the common people, certainly throughout Christendom. That is an advantage which ought not to be ignored. The reverence of men for the Bible should not be undermined.

PREACHERS TO BE BIBLE-MEN.

Young gentlemen, I cannot say all that I have marked out for myself. I shall reserve some further thought on this subject for to-morrow afternoon, as to the methods by which you are to use this book. But let me say to you, that, in my judgment, all other education put together is not an equivalent for a thorough and sympathetic personal knowledge of the Bible. You ought to live in its atmosphere until it strikes utterly through and through you. No philosophical formula, no statistical tabulations, can be a substitute for its essential spirit,—that which is in it of God, and that conception which is in it of regenerated manhood or the development of spiritual life in man, and all those things which fill the apothegms, and maxims, and brief sentences of the Apostle's writings full of marrow, and make them overflow with sweetness.

Take those little words and expressions which occur in the thirteenth chapter of Corinthians: "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; love never faileth." Every one of them is a flower with honey in the bottom. They are just as full of sweetness and fragrance as they can be. All the way through, every slightest word was dropped out of a honey-bearing soul.

The Word of God has not grown old, any more than

forests grow old, or the sky grows old, or the seasons grow old ; and with all your gettings, get that understanding which comes from making yourselves perfectly familiar with the Bible, with its interior substance, as that which shall be a lamp unto your feet, and a light unto your path, so that you shall be accustomed to look at everything in life, unconsciously, from the divine standpoint, measuring men, ways, motives, all things, from the inner spirit of the Word of God. Then the outside world and science will help you, and the Church and its ordinances will help you.

First of all things, be ye transformed into spiritual Bible-men. If you had not another volume on earth, you could make very excellent preachers of yourselves by the Word of the Lord. Allow me to speak of my own early ministry in this respect. I owe more to the Book of Acts and to the writings of the Apostle Paul than to all other books put together. I was sent into the wilderness of Indiana to preach among the poor and ignorant, and I lived much in my saddle. My library was in my saddle-bags ; I went from camp-meeting to camp-meeting, and from log-hut to log-hut. I had my New Testament, and from it I learned that which has been the very secret of any success that I have had in the Christian ministry. My strength has been in the love of Christ ; in the glory of that conception of God which is in Christ Jesus ; in the sense that my business was to win men ; and in my attempt to win them by bringing the same influences to bear upon them which I found abounding throughout the New Testament.

Blessed it would be, for many of you, if you could be shut up to the Bible in your work, if, for several years, at least during the earlier part of your ministry, you could go into the field, taking your Bible in your hand, and with it labor for men, for their conversion and for their salvation.





II.

HOW TO USE THE BIBLE.

February 12, 1874.

THE MANY-SIDEDNESS OF THE BIBLE.

IT may be said of the Bible, as it is of the alphabet: it is what you make it. Letters all have a power of their own, and they are unchangeable; but with you is the combination, and the literature which flows from the alphabet is your literature, though the alphabet represents it. We see streams setting from the Word of God, almost innumerable, of theories and doctrines; and they can hardly all be correct, because some of them are mutually destructive. And so I may say, without being misunderstood, that there are a great many Bibles. But in using the same Bible, by the same man, there are diverse modes, which make really different books of it. There are three in particular that I shall speak of this afternoon, in continuing, as I do, the discussion of the *Sources of Christian Truth and Doctrine*.

There are what may be called, then, the Bible of the closet, the Bible of the class-room, and the Bible of the pulpit. I do not mention these as being separate from each other, because they run more or less into one

another. Still less do I speak of them as being antagonistic, because they all have, or may have, an auxiliary relationship to each other; so that the most perfect use of sacred Scripture will be that which combines the three.

THE BIBLE OF THE CLOSET.

First, the *Bible of the closet*. It has this peculiarity, that its function is to give sustenance, light, direction, inspiration, and consolation to the person who makes application to it. It is the word of God, as studied by any one for his personal benefit, not seeking to know his relation to others, except so far as his duties are concerned; not seeking to know the system of the universe; not looking for philosophies, nor for ideas, except so far as philosophies or ideas have immediate reference to his own personal life. It is the personal Bible, the private man's Bible; and as such it is to be studied in the spirit in which the Apostle spoke when he said:—

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Now, no two men are just alike; no two men have precisely the same difficulties; no two men have precisely the same needs. Put twenty men at the goodly table of the New Haven House, and you shall find scarcely two of them selecting their food alike; watch their amount of sleep, and you shall scarcely find any two of them that agree exactly in that particular; and the same will be true in respect to other experiences

where temperament, habit, necessity, business, and various other elements come in; and as this is in evident accordance with natural law, you think it is wholesome.

Men read the Word of God on the principle of elective affinity, and there are many who go trumpeting and triumphing all the way through it, because they always see things *couleur de rose*. They are of a buoyant, imaginative temperament; they fish for that in the Bible which feeds them, that they like to read; and they go skipping and jumping along on the salient points of joy, and leave out the interstitial spaces of darkness. And if you could mark what for twenty years has sustained them, you would find that it is not the whole of the book, nor that part of the book which some other man took, but something that was personal to themselves, and that came to them on account of certain wants and tastes.

Then, if you take another person who is naturally timid, who is melancholy, who is overwhelmed in life with disappointments, you will find that he, going to the Word of God, is perpetually comforting himself with the consolations which he finds in it. He acts also on the principle of elective affinity. Because he likes consolation, he therefore seeks it everywhere. Because he needs comfort, he, as it were, works it out of the Word of God, looking at different parts of Scripture always or generally from the same point of view.

I suspect that there is not a single one of you who is in the ministry, and who has preached on any subject involving human wants, who has not had some persons in his congregation that said, "I hope he will shape that sermon so as to suit my case"; but, instead of that,

the preacher went on with his "first," and "secondly," and "thirdly," through his entire discourse, and they went out, saying, "Well, I suppose that was a good sermon. I hoped it would come down to where I am, and meet my need, but it did not." They wanted consolation; but they got an intellectual disquisition on something which wonderfully helped somebody else in the congregation, but did not feed them.

READING FOR PERSONAL NEED.

Therefore, of the scores of people who go to the Word of God, each, if he goes honestly and earnestly, seeks to feed himself; and what food he wants depends very much on the way in which he is made, on the exigencies in which he stands, and on the experiences that have developed some parts of his moral nature and left some parts of it uneducated and unformed. There are ten thousand human wants, and no one man can prescribe for them all. It would require omniscience to do that. But the Word of God meets them, and must interpret itself to people according to their various needs. When persons are made willing by the Spirit of God, by the Spirit of the Invisible, they will find, both in and out of the Bible, green pastures and still waters for themselves.

So I may say that the Word of God is like the circumjacent country. One goes out from your classes, and scales East or West Rock. He studies its structure. He explores the whole country to make himself familiar with its geological formation. And when he returns, he gives an account of that part of nature in which he is particularly interested. Another goes out and comes

back without having seen a stone, — unless he has stubbed his toe against one. He has been studying the botany of the country. He loves that. Another does not care for either of these departments as a realm of scientific facts; for he has a poet's eye, and would sing, if he could, the things that he sees. He sees them in suggestions. Behind every plant, there is to his eye a more beautiful one. Above everything that he beholds there is something rarer than the thing itself. The artist follows the poet, and is not greatly different from him; but he is kept near to the earth by the necessity of representation. He sees things in a still different light. He studies their combinations, their gradations of color, and their minute parts. He is thinking all the time, "How could that be portrayed? How could this be worked up? How could I sketch that?"

All of them have seen nature; but nature is not different because they bring back different reports concerning it.

Now, through the glades, in the forests, over the mountains, along the valleys, and upon the plains of Sacred Writ, men go, and follow the leading of their want. Blessed be God, they have that liberty. And the same man will seek different things according to his varying moods or needs. Men seek sometimes the things that open toward the other life, and sometimes the things that interpret the lowest experiences of this life. So there is always this personal Bible, — a Bible that is vastly neglected. Men think that they read their Bibles when they do not. There are many who have a superstitious reverence for it, and go to it periodically, and skim over portions of it; but they do not read it.

BONDAGE AND LIBERTY IN READING.

A man starts for his business, and gets as far as the door; and his wife calls out to him, "My dear, have you forgotten prayers?" "Well," he says, "we haven't had prayers, have we? I did forget." Back he goes, and takes his Bible, and turns to the twelfth Psalm. He chooses that because it is short. Blessed be the Psalms; they are of all lengths and shapes, to meet every emergency! Having hastily gone through a perfunctory service, he starts for his business again, saying, "The Devil didn't catch me to-day; I have read my Bible."

Now, how does that differ from putting an amulet around a man's neck, or from worshiping an idol? You might as well look into a cook-shop window and think you are fed, as to go to your Bible in that way and think that it is of any use to you. You have *abused* it, not used it.

I lay great stress on this liberty which belongs to men, this necessity which is laid upon them, to find that in the Word of God which shall meet their case, and read it according to their personal wants. There are those who learn the Bible; there are thousands of humble people to whom it becomes familiar; for it is a peculiarity of the Word of God, that as men run under trees and get behind rocks when storms are in the sky, though otherwise they would not, so we seek a covert in the Bible when we are in trouble, as we would not at any other time.

God's Word is not a house of bondage. It is not required that a man shall every morning marshal his

family, and call the roll, and grind out a ritualistic or regulation prayer, and read his Bible. God's Word is a Father's house, into which you have a right to go, and speak or keep silent. You are children of God, and this provision has been made for you; but it is not to be enforced upon you, as though you were slaves. You are to avail yourselves of it according to your need. You are free in this matter.

I suppose no person ever did or ever will read the whole Bible in his life. I know there are persons who read it by letter; I hear people say that they make it a rule to read the whole Bible once a year; and I have no doubt that they skate over it once a year; but I do not think they do more than that, because it is not all for them.

Take, for instance, a great, square-built, good, honest-minded, practical Yankee, who knows the quality of matter, and who knows how to put thing and thing together, and make money out of them,—take such a man and put him into Solomon's Songs, and see what he will make out of them.

Take now an Oriental, a man who was born under different skies; who is of a different stock; whose ancestors have had different associations from generation to generation; whose mind-methods are different; whose growth is more by the imagination and less by the practical reason,—take such a man, and he will say of the Songs of Solomon, "That is the buckle of the Bible. It is that which clasps and holds together all the other books."

And so, all the way through the Bible, there are things which men who are proud, or men who are

constitutionally without wisdom, cannot understand, — they are mysteries to them. There are deep things for mystics in the Bible which people who have no mysticism are unable to see. They do not see them when they look at them. In the Bible there are things for the twilight, things for the moonlight, things for the midnight, things for the day-dawn, and things for the noontide. The Bible is filled with ineffable riches for men; and it belongs to every man to select according to his need.

The different parts of the Bible are of very different values for private reading. I think there is a great deal of the Bible that is just as necessary for the race as the spelling-book; but how long is it since you sat down to read your spelling-books? You are done with them; and yet you do not disparage them, nor cry them to naught.

THE DECALOGUE.

Take the Ten Commandments. It is true that by a very liberal construction you can make them cover about everything in creation, as, by beating gold with gold-beaters' skin you can make a piece as big as my hand cover an acre or so. The Ten Commandments stand where men emerge from the lowest conditions, and in the dawn of the recognition of God's authority. They have to do with the commonest vices of men, and with their plainest duties in society. They are the charter that imposes conditions without which there could not be rectitude, or the proprieties of life, or the sanctities of the household. But they are all negative. All that which is called in the New Testament "the

fruit of the Spirit," is left out of them. Of the glow of interior illumination there is not a ray in them. Far back they stand in the beginning of the history of the world, and far down in that history which reproduces itself in every generation. They are adapted to the building up of a lower style of man. Their cry, forever, is, "Thou shalt not," "Thou shalt not." Woe to that man who has lived among churches and Bibles and preachers, and has not got higher than the Ten Commandments! And yet we see them emblazoned in the House of God as though they expressed the highest ideas to which men have reached. They say to men, "Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not commit adultery"; the grosser and more bestial forms of sin are forbidden by them; but those moral virtues and spiritual attainments which belong to a developed manhood are not enjoined in them. I do not say that it would not do very well for men who are pretty high up in civilization to read them yet; there are many men that are called civilized who I think would profit still by reading them in respect to some of those vices which they condemn. But they are an illustration of what I mean. In my estimation, the Ten Commandments are not to be compared with the Sermon on the Mount, which is sometimes supposed to be the highest peak in the New Testament. No, it is not, by a great deal. The fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth chapters of John — those incomparable discourses of Christ in the love-hours which just preceded his crucifixion — are as much higher than the Sermon on the Mount as that is higher than the Ten Commandments.

There are, then, variations in the moral value of different parts of the Bible, if men only have the interpreting necessity in them by which to discern these things.

Such is what I call *the Bible of the closet*. It is interpreted by personal necessity, and by elective affinity; but that is not all. It is an immediate source of consolation. It comforts in sorrow; it relieves in perplexity; it is a mother in the household; it is a counselor to the mechanic, to the workman, when he asks, "Where shall I go? What shall I do? How shall I carry myself?" When men are stirred up; when they are oppressed; when they are burdened; when they are yoked, harnessed, and driven by depressing moods, then they, above all other men, must have a personal Bible speaking to them, day by day. Under such circumstances the Bible becomes, not only a lamp to their feet and a light to their path, but bread for their life, medicine for their soul, and water coming to them from under the very throne of God itself.

THE CLASS-ROOM BIBLE.

Next, we have *the Bible of the class-room*. This is the Bible philosophized and interpreted according to some system. It is indispensable that there should be a Bible of the class-room. The Word of God is so large; it touches human nature on so many sides; there is so much in it of duty and of destiny hereafter; it is so composite and so variable; parts of it are so apparently antagonistic with each other until a comprehensive view is gained of it, as a record that has come down through thousands of revolving years, among different

peoples and in different languages ; there is so much in it that requires explanation and rearrangement, that when we undertake to look at it as a whole, it is necessary that there should be a Bible of the class-room, in which the various teachings shall be digested and accounted for.

First come those indispensable men, the philologist and the archæologist. These two men simply take the Bible and put it into your hands with such illustration as is essential to a knowledge of the text.

THE VALUE OF THEOLOGY.

Then comes the theologian proper. Now, young gentlemen, I have often indulged myself in words that would seem to undervalue theologians ; but you know I do not mean it ! I profess to be a theologian myself ; my father was a theologian ; my brothers are all theologians ; and so are many men whom I revere, and who are the brightest lights of genius, I think, that have ever shone in the world. I believe in theologians ; and yet I think it is perfectly fair to make game of them ! I do not think there is anything in this world, whether it be man or that which is beneath man, that is not legitimate food for innocent, unvicious fun ; and if it should cast a ray of light on the truth, and alleviate the tediousness of a lecture now and then to have a slant at theologians, why, I think they can stand it ! It will not hurt them, and it may amuse us. So let me speak freely, — the more so, because I affirm that it is indispensable for every man who is to do a considerable religious work during a long period, or with any degree of self-consistency, to be a theologian. He must

have method; there must be a sequence of ideas in his thought. And if the work runs long enough and far enough, and embraces many things, there must be a system of applying means to ends, there must be a knowledge of instruments. These things are theology, in a sense, — a part of it, at any rate.

Indeed, philosophizing follows of necessity after culture. It is one of the fruits of intelligence. To merely know facts is to be no higher than an animal. When you begin to know the relations of facts you begin to ascend. When you know facts and their relations in a large department, you become a philosopher of that department.

Theologian, then, is only another name for *philosopher*. The theologian's department is the philosophy of moral ideas and their connections with mankind.

Not only so, but a good understanding of Scripture itself demands that there should be interpretations given of it. The work is made more accessible and plainer by theology, in spite of all its evils of method. And in the main let me say that, while I do not believe in a great many of the theological methods and systems which have prevailed, I do not despise them. I do not speak of them with contempt, any more than I do of certain civil governments, which certain nations or certain times demanded, but which do not fit our times nor our nation; or, any more than I do of the schools of Alexandria, which did not compare with Yale or Harvard, but which were admirable in their age, and which, by their very excellences, stimulated growth, the old institutions being no longer applicable to the new conditions which were produced by them.

As summer makes the tree so much larger that the bark has to let out a seam, because the old bark will not do for the new growth, and as the same thing takes places from season to season, so mental philosophy — for all theology is mental philosophy — changes from age to age, through both obvious and latent causes.

EXCELLENCES AND DEFECTS OF CALVINISM.

Look, for instance, at the view of the Divine economy which was represented, in an iron age, by John Calvin, — a man without bowels and intensely in sympathy with the monarchic idea. That view has been assailed a thousand times more severely in the invisible process by which democratic ideas have gone through the mass of men, than ever it has been by those who have spoken and written against it. Men have come to have an entirely different notion of the rights of the citizen ; and political affairs have changed in men's estimation ; and those dynastic views and ideas of the Divine Being which once prevailed would be absolutely impossible to men in our day, except such as are in sympathy with the special faculties of self-esteem, firmness, and conscientiousness, which suit the ruler-mind and the ruler-nature. But in general it is to be said that all the systems of theology which have prevailed in the world have done a great work.

I may speak in your hearing, sometimes, slightly of John Calvin. He knows as well as I do that I do not mean any harm to him. I revere him, and appreciate his great work. The world is greatly indebted to him. When the whole of Christendom was broken

off from sensuous and visible objects of adoration, and they felt that they had lost everything ; when, having been trained to believe that religion presented to them bodily, in church forms, all that they needed in their worship, they were called to suddenly step out of these forms, they said, "Why, we have lost everything ; there is nothing left." Before, there were days, and calendar, and saints, and priests, and garments, and cathedrals, and all the panoply that was required for a believer in material things, but now they were gone. When it was said to them, "Abandon your symbols and ceremonies and services," and they were like the men who, having eaten garlies and onions in Egypt, found themselves eating nothing on the other side of the Red Sea, then John Calvin filled their imagination, and gave them just as much to believe as they could hold, and a little more.

The transition was a magnificent one. It was a grand era. As a mental phenomenon it is not half enough pondered. He substituted for that which had been taken away from them, or which they had given up, a system of such intellectual power and such elements for admiration and adhesion, that it was well adapted to the irregular times in which he reared it. So it did a wonderful work, besides being an ark in which to carry men over from papacy to the better ground of Protestantism. I like old John Calvin, because I think he believed what he preached, — though I cannot say so of hundreds of later men ; they are not large enough for the space they occupy. If David had gone forth in Saul's armor, his voice might have sounded out from it on this side, or on that ; he might have

rattled about in it after a fashion; but he would not have felt at home in it. Men go into a system of theology which is as much larger than they are as a lobster is larger than a snail; and they pipe through it, and make a little noise, and this is all! I do not accuse them of insincerity; but I say that the system they use is not adapted to them. John Calvin's system, however, fitted *him* all over, and I think he really enjoyed it,—there are evidences that he did; and its work since that time has been wonderful. It has done both good and evil. It has raised up many sturdy and stalwart Christian men. But it has also crushed many and many a heart. It has wrung sorrows and sadnesses out of sensitive natures such as none but the recording angel knows. It has turned many days to darkness; and much of the light of God which came free as the air has been intercepted by it; and when it fell upon the understandings of men, its color was some lurid red or some hideous blue. That I know right well, both in my own experience and in the experience of those whose troubles I have been called to meditate in hundreds and hundreds of instances.

So, while I regard Calvin as one of the master minds of the ages; while I believe that some part of the truth which belonged to his system was never before so ably stated as he stated it; while I think that his statement of it can never be improved,—yet I say that in many respects, so far as that is concerned which should be the supreme idea of any system, namely, *the nature and administration of the Divine*, I do not think it is Christian. I think it is essentially what the religion of

nature was, before nature knew that there was a Saviour. It is monarchic and hard, in my judgment.

Well, all this that I have been saying about theology and theologians is apologetic and explanatory. I would set myself right with you. I say, therefore, that I admire theologians, and that I thoroughly believe in theology, though I claim the right to criticise both, and to express my like or dislike, according to the measure of reason and feeling which God has given me.

WHAT THE BIBLE IS NOT.

Now, then, let me speak of the way in which the Bible comes into the class-room, and becomes the foundation of a system.

Generally, almost invariably, the theologian comes to the Bible (in times gone by he did, at any rate) with the general impression that it contains all that is necessary for a man to know in respect to the Divine Being; that it is relatively a perfect exposition of the nature of God. The Bible does not make any such claim, but the theologian goes to the class-room, Bible in hand, with the assumption that there is in the Word of God all that is needed for the development of a system of universal moral government; that it does not confine itself to substantial facts and general outlines, but that it runs down deep into minutiae, and far back into the eternities, even; that everything essential to the belief of a Christian man is contained there in so many words, or by such immediate inference as to be unavoidable and certain; that directly, or by indispensable conclusion, the frame of the Church,

its polity, its offices, its government, its work, and its whole administration, either are delivered, or are to be delivered, to the hands of men, by provision which has been made in the Word of God. All these assumptions are made on the supposition that the Word of God is a perfect man of counsel, and is adequate to all the emergencies of the world. Now, I do not believe in any one of those points. I do not believe that the Bible contains all that it is necessary for a man to know of God. It was not designed that it should. Do you suppose that the Bible was meant to be a substitute for the revelation of the Holy Ghost? Do you suppose that there is anything in the Bible which can teach men as I was taught, when almost every earthly sensation was paralyzed, and I stood by my dead first-born? In the utter abandonment of my soul, I opened my heart to God, and his Spirit came down and taught me a lesson of his fatherhood that I found neither in Genesis, nor in Exodus, nor in Leviticus, nor in the Prophets, nor in any of the books of the Bible. It was first disclosed to me by the Holy Ghost; and then I went back to the Word of God. Though I did not see the thing itself, I saw its germ there; and I did not know how to interpret it until I received light from the Divine Spirit.

Do you not suppose that God means man to work out his own knowledge of the Bible, and of the truths that are in it, as well as to work out his own salvation? Do you suppose the Bible is a substitute for human findings-out? Do you suppose that it contains everything that is to be known? Do you suppose that it is a thesaurus, an encyclopedia of knowledge, meeting

universal necessity? Do you suppose that as a fountain of instruction it is all in all? Certainly it is not. The unfolding ages continually add to our knowledge of things, never taking us away from the germs, any more than literature takes us away from the alphabet, or any more than the highest mathematics take us away from the numerals, which, disappearing, reappear again in the highest functions and uses.

The man who has found himself out by experience, who has brought in the largest harvests from life, who has pressed from the grape the pure wine, who has made of wheat the best flour, — he feels, more than any other, how rich the Bible is. He goes out of the Bible to find things that he does not find in it or that he finds there in germinal forms, rude tendencies, which it was designed that man should work out. The Bible was meant to start him, but it was intended that he should go on to perfection.

So, then, without time and development, in other words, without the ordinary building process which the Divine Providence is carrying on through all the ages of the world; without that revelation of knowledge which God is bringing forth from the earth beneath us, from the starry depths above us, from past generations of men, from nature, from governments, from climates, from industries, and from emergencies that have swelled the conceptions of humanity in every age, — without all these elements, the Bible itself is not perfect. For the Bible was not meant to be like a tree standing alone. Neither was it meant to be like a solitary cave, with some oracle speaking from the wilderness. It is part and parcel of human life; of

providence ; of the great process of unity under the Divine administration. It goes with man, giving and taking alike ; giving more and receiving more ; forever augmenting ; never so poor as in the beginning, and never so rich as in the later periods of the world.

ERRORS OF INTERPRETATION.

In interpreting the Bible, men are liable — I say by way of criticism — to error in carrying back modern ideas to old words in the Bible, so that final fruits are made to stand in the very beginnings of time. They convert the whole liberty of emotion and imagination into ideas ; and to things that are of themselves evanescent and transitory they give fixity. In other words, I complain that a book so generously and carelessly written, now with the unlimited freedom of prophetic inspiration, now with poetry, and now with sentiment, is so often ground over, and that it comes out of the mill in the form of absolute scientific statistics. The personal element is construed into the universal. That which is said of one man, and of him in particular emergencies, in the Bible, is translated as something which belongs to human nature. That which is said to be true in one age is supposed to be a generic statement of that which is true in every age. That which is true of a man in one stage of his development is supposed to be true of him in every stage of his development.

In this way, men, forming their systems of theology out of the Bible, bring to it methods which it cannot bear ; which mar it rather than clear it up ; which spoil it rather than help it.

All this is a criticism of their method. It is a criti-

cism, not of their attempt to draw out a generic view and statement of the Bible, but of their attempt to do it by imperfect, and sometimes by very wrong methods.

DANGERS OF THE RIGHT METHOD.

Then, again, they bring the right principle to work in the wrong way, which results in a fatal error; the principle, namely, that the Bible must be interpreted, not from the letter altogether, nor at all, but from the thing that the letter speaks of. If I were to state it in terms that many would regard as audacious, I should say that the interpretation of the Bible is not in itself, but outside of itself. This may seem to be a bold statement, but it is not. You all believe it. You know perfectly well that it is true in regard to physical things. A child in the Sunday school knows that when the Bible says "stone" there is nothing in the letters that spell that word which tells you what stone is. But if, seeing the word in the Bible you go and look at the thing itself, then you can return to the Bible, and say, "I know what stone is." If the Bible speaks of rivers, of mountains, of trees, of lambs, of calves, of lions, of peacocks, of gold, of silver, or of anything that is material, nobody supposes that one can understand what these things are until he has seen them outside of the Bible.

Now the same thing is true in respect to social elements. If the Bible speaks of husband and wife, or of brother and sister, we know no more about them than we do about cherubim and seraphim, unless we know what brother and sister and husband and wife were before we go to the Bible. We take that which is

outside of the Bible and use it as a means of interpreting statements which are made inside of it.

So, in all the relations of life, where the Bible speaks of love, and sparing, and pitying, and helping, and hoping, and all elements of this class, we gain a knowledge of them from the exterior, and then carry that knowledge to the interior, of the book.

That which is true, and which is admitted to be true, in respect to physical and social elements, is likewise true of all forms of government. Nothing in the Bible would teach us what a king was, if we had not learned it outside of the Bible. Laws, constitutions, modes of public procedure, — the knowledge of these things cannot be conveyed by the letter alone. Nations, towns, cities, villages, — when these things are spoken of in Scripture, we first go to the things themselves, and then we bring back to the letter, to throw light upon its interpretation, the knowledge that we have gained.

The same is true in respect to mental philosophy, or that which relates to things that are beyond the reach of our sense, — things that transcend our powers of investigation, — things that pertain to the invisible world. The nearest that we can come to these is to take the analogies which approach most nearly to them, and then, for the rest, depend upon the imagination. Thus we shape them as well as we can. We never can know perfectly things which are not within the reach of our comprehension by one or other of the faculties of the mind.

The Scriptures address themselves to our power of apprehension. We have means of understanding by which to obtain that knowledge toward which they

point ; and, having obtained it, we go back to the statements which they make.

Now, to be safe in the formation of a theory or doctrine from the Bible, men should not only recognize this fact, but they should guard against its abuse, — for it may be abused. It is open to very serious objections and liabilities. It is like a road along the edge of a fathomless gulf, and therefore it ought to be carefully guarded. Men should be taught to use their liberty in interpretation ; but men have used that liberty, and denied that they used it. They have brought to the interpretation of God their foregoing knowledge, their special political biases, their overt or latent notions of mental philosophy, their views of the divine moral nature, their ideas of the way in which God has constructed each man's personality ; and these things have all, unconsciously to them, gone into the construction of their theologies. Thus they have used great liberty of interpretation, and they ought to have used it ; but it would have been better if they had used it with their eyes open, with larger method, and with proper rules for the correction of personal error, and what not.

HUMAN REASON TO INTERPRET DIVINE THINGS.

But if men do it avowedly, a great outcry is made against it. If, for instance, I should say, in the pulpit of Plymouth Church, that the human reason should sit in judgment on divine things, and if it should be reported in the papers the next day, thrice a thousand good men would hold up their hands with horror, and exclaim, "Where will that fellow stop?" And yet, if you must not bring human reason to divine mysteries,

I should like to know how you are going to bring divine mysteries to human reason,—and if they are not brought there, they are nothing to you; or, under such circumstances, they do not exist so far as you are concerned. Just as though the Word of God did not appeal to reason in the most profound things. “Come, now, and let us reason together,” saith the Lord. Thus men are laid under obligation to use their reason. The human reason, as God made it, and adapted it to the purposes of considering everything that concerns our welfare on earth,—wherefore should it not be carried up and brought to bear upon those things which relate to our eternal welfare? May we not reasonably say that the human reason must be employed, directly, in our judgment of divine truths, so far as they are brought to us? It is safer to say that than to deny it. You are to take care and not fall into the imperfections to which the human reason may lead; you are to guard against the liabilities to error which accompany its use; but you are not to deny the necessity of using it. Those imperfections and liabilities may be allowed for, may be accounted for, but the loss which would result from not using it cannot be made up. And if you use it for the consideration of divine themes, saying to yourself all the time that you do not use it, you have all the mischiefs to which the use of it renders you liable, and you have them in reduplicated forms.

If, then, you say that we must not mix philosophy with pure heavenly intelligence as it is revealed in the Word of God, I say that no man does read the Word of God without bringing his philosophy to it.

Thus you will make life and fact an interpreter.

Thus you will keep Bible-truth down close to human consciousness. It is not by bringing into the class-room reason, experience, those things which belong to the great community, and making them instruments for interpreting the Bible, that we change the proportions and the emphasis of truth; it is by such a use of the Bible in the class-room as makes it a subject of dry philosophy, unleavened in its form and structure by the recognized human element which it unsuccessfully attempts to shut out, that we are likely to do it violence.

But no man ought to suppose that by his reason, or by the collective reason of mankind, will ever be brought out and rendered plain the full of all that belongs to the germinal statements of Scripture. I take a single element, — "God is love." Now, I say that when you take that text and announce it, you are like a man who puts his foot on a ship, and starts out on the Atlantic Ocean, with the determination that he will know the depth at every point, and every curve of the shore, around and around the globe. He has work for a life before him. Consider any form of love that you ever knew. Where is there in a word anything that can represent the inflammation, the fruitfulness, the fire, of that feeling, shooting every whither, like an auroral light by night, or like the sunlight by day? Who can express it by a word, or any number of words? Sing your sonnet, make your poem, write your descriptive letter; but after all, the pure loving heart, that has had the dream of love all night and the vision of it all day, has had more experience of it than the whole of human language can ever put together.

The thing transcends all bounds of expression, and is immensely larger than any words can make it, even on earth and among men; and oh! what must it be when you raise it to the proportions and the power of the Infinite, — when it is not simply love as conceived of in the fallible human soul, but when it is love as it exists in the Divine nature? The qualities of divinity reach so high, they are so far beyond the power of our feeble minds to conceive, they are so vast, and they penetrate so deep into the recesses of infinity, that when we contemplate them, we say, as Paul said after his most rapturous life and most glorious experience, “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

RELATIVE VALUE OF BIBLE DOCTRINES.

A great many doctrines that are contained in the Bible, and that are supposed to be of the most transcendent importance, men regard as important only on account of their structural relation to the systems of which they are a part. There are a great many things in the Bible which, in and of themselves, are regarded as of very little consequence, but which in their connection with other things are considered of very great moment. For instance, the Apostle sets forth how to make a man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work. There are those who take exception to his teaching on that subject, and treat it as of little or no account; but the theologian says, “If you do not hold that, what becomes of this, that, or the other point in your system? There will be a screw loose

when that is left out." And so men hold one or another doctrine because they think it is important to the cohesion and efficient working of the different portions of their system. This axle is connected with that wheel out yonder, and that wheel carries another wheel, and that another; and the action of every part depends upon the action of every other part; and so it is deemed indispensable that every part should be kept intact: and men's theological reasonings are carried on accordingly. Doctrines are largely valued with reference to their connections with other doctrines. The result is that systems of theology become more important in men's estimation than the Bible itself, and more important than the souls of men for whose benefit it was given to the world. A great many men preach "for the sake of the truth, the TRUTH," they will tell you; whereas, I supposed that men preached for the salvation of their fellow-men. "You must not give up God's truth," they say, when you puzzle them. When you say to them, "What is the use of such a view? what fruit comes of it? what good does it do?" and they are perplexed, they say, "Ah! it is taught, and it must be maintained." And then there is a roll-call, and those texts are trotted out which are supposed to teach that view. Men are afraid that if they give up this or that truth of dogma, the foundation will be taken out from under their system, and they will have nothing to stand on. So, as men do not agree in all the doctrines which should constitute a true theological system, we have Arminianism, and Pelagianism, and Semi-Pelagianism, and Demi-semi-Pelagianism. Men are divided in reference to the various doctrines of

religion, some denying those that are held by others, and some giving more emphasis to certain ones than others do, where they are held in common; and they lose sight of the fact that the value of God's truth consists in its power of carrying salvation to men. Paul, you remember, said, "I determined not to know anything among you save [he ought to have said the *Old Testament Scriptures*, but he did not] Jesus Christ." No, that was not what he said: he said, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, — and *him crucified*!" What a horror it was to those who held the Greek idea of God to be told that he should be susceptible of crucifixion! and what a horror it was to those in whom the Jewish prejudices were strong, to be told that their Messiah could be whelmed in disgrace, could be put to death, and could be inclosed in a sepulcher! And yet Paul would not equivocate to them, and he said, "I did not come to preach to you old ceremonials or old laws, however good; I came to present Christ to you in the most offensive way that he can be presented." That was the best way in which he could lift them out of their mere physical idea of God, and therefore he would not abandon it.

SELECTION OF DOCTRINE FOR PREACHING.

This change of emphasis and proportion in truth opens a very wide field for investigation, and perhaps it better becomes an essay than a lecture; so I will only announce it, and say that in your career in the seminary it is worth your while to learn all the doctrines of the Bible as they are related to theological systems; but that when you come to preach you will certainly

very soon sift what you know, or what you think you know ; and you will find that one and another thing which never seemed of much importance in the lecture-room are beginning to be very important in your regard. In other words, if you are true men, and if you go out into the world to preach, with the idea that Christianity is the work of creating divine manhood among men, that it is the work of bringing the power of God to bear, through the truth, upon human nature, then, in spite of yourself, you will take the things which strike the most directly at men's interior natures, and obliterate their prejudices, and draw forth their sympathies, and bring them higher and higher toward God, along new lines of interpretation and measurement and criticism. There will be this or that doctrine that you deemed of very great importance, and that you thought you would preach about, but that somehow or other you do not get a chance to take up.

You will find old men who will say to you, "Sir, you should give to every man his portion in due season." Yes, you should ; but it does not follow that you should give to every man something of everything as being his portion. Every mother gives to her child its milk in due season, as its portion ; but she does not give roast beef to the babe on her bosom. Every physician gives to each patient under his care his portion of medicine in due season, but he does not give to all his patients the same medicine. He may not give in one family, as long as he lives, that which he is continually giving in another family. One disease requires one sort of treatment, and another disease another sort. Sometimes

astringents are necessary, and sometimes emollients. Here stimulants are needful, and there sedatives. The kinds of medicine which shall be given are determined by the condition of the patient.

Now, it is said, "You must give men the whole system of God's moral government in the universe"; but I say that it is not all in the Bible. It is not discovered yet. Some of the elements of it are there, but not all of them. The whole system of God's moral government has not been disclosed. It may be thought presumptuous to say so, but it is true. And I say, further, that it is not the rule of the Bible to undertake to disclose the whole of the royalty of the Divine government, or of the Divine nature. You cannot find out these things to perfection.

What, then, are you to do? You are to use the truth of God as you would use materials for erecting a building, not all at once, but in their proper order. The growth of manhood is not instantaneous, but gradual. The developing of a man in holy faith is a work into which enter the elements of selection, proportion, emphasis, and frequency.

THE PREACHER'S BIBLE.

This would naturally lead me to speak, though I need not, of the preacher's Bible, which is really the combination of the other two. The Bible of the preacher may be, and ought to be, the Bible of the class-room, but it must be especially a personal, private Bible. No man is fit to preach who has not felt his own need of the Bible, or of the truths that are in it. No man is fit to preach whose garments do not smell

of the fire of agony. Spurzheim said, "No woman is fit to be married who has not seen great affliction." That is the intensive form in which he expressed his judgment as to the benefits of the ripening influence of sorrow.

A young man who goes out to preach is never ordained when the consecrating hand has been laid on his head, and he has entered upon the ministry. The ceremony of ordination is very well as far as it goes: but not until the providence of God has put its hand upon you; not until you have ached and wept and prayed in secret places; not until you have realized your weakness and unworthiness, and said, "Would God that I were dead"; not until you have felt that your appareling is as nothing; not until with unutterable desire you have turned to God with the meekness and humility and gentleness and sweetness of a child, and been conscious that you were carried in the arms of his love, — not until then will you be fully ordained. But when you have had this administration, how blessed the Word of God will be to you! It may be that you will not want to read some parts of it; the mother does not sing everything that there is in the music-book; she sings those tunes which are sweetest to her children and to herself; and so you will read those portions of the Bible which are appropriate to your need. You will each get from that beautiful tree, the Word of God, such fruit as you require for your consolation and encouragement in life, and for your up-building in righteousness.

You will have your private Bible from which you will derive light and food and comfort according to circumstances; then you will have your Bible of the

class-room, by the aid of which you will attempt to bring under one comprehensive arrangement of successional development the principal ideas which pertain to God and his relations to mankind, — always understanding that “we see through a glass, darkly”; and at last you will come to the preacher’s Bible itself, with all its vast resources, from which you will take truths that are good for your own soul and for other men’s souls, that you may bring them, with all the vigor and unction and emotion which comes from your personal participation in them, home to the salvation of men. When you have the preacher’s Bible, you have that which is like a living power, and you are a trumpet, and the life of God is behind you, so that the words which come from you are breathed by him.





III.

THE TRUE METHOD OF PRESENTING GOD.

February 18, 1874.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT.

WE often lose the importance of the sayings of the New Testament by familiarity with them. I am sure no man can adequately understand (so great is it) the declaration of our Saviour, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." Although no familiarity can quite stale that, yet, having heard it from our childhood, and slid over it unthinkingly, we may not see it opening itself up in such a way as to show all the avenues of meaning which are really in it.

In the first place, it is very remarkable how intense is the homage, and indeed what is the kind of homage, which is required. It is not obedience simply; it is not awe; it is not admiration; it is *love*, — the deepest, the strongest, the most comprehensive of all human experiences. Nor is it merely a love which acts mildly. The cumulation of phrase upon phrase, which we find employed in that command, shows the weakness of language, and the strength of the thing to be expressed.

It is a love that is to be made up of all that there is in man.

And this is not all; we are to consider that this love is to be expressed not toward our father, not toward our mother, not toward our natural kindred; that it is not to run out through the open avenues of friendship; but that it is to be directed toward a great invisible Being, whom the eye never saw, whom the ear never heard, whom the hand never grasped. That invisible presence named "God" is to be the object of the strongest affection of which the human mind is capable. Now, when we think how hard it is for men to adapt themselves to duties that are visible, or to yield to influences that carry with them collateral motives and incitements, we may well suppose that it would be hard for them to make an invisible Presence, who does not address himself to us through any of the ordinary channels of the human mind, the object of such overpowering affection as this.

There is another consideration. Not only is this the command of God in the incarnated Christ Jesus, but we are to add his declaration that around about it cling the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures. When unfolded they surround this great Center. Such was their meaning, as they were interpreted in the ancient day. All the prophets and early writers and law-givers of the Hebrews meant but this: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself," — the two great divisions of the command.

THE OBJECTS OF PREACHING.

Now, if this is the great central idea, then the preaching of *God* is the foundation of all pulpit instruction and of all true systems of religion, and in preaching this you will strike the central source of power. If, therefore, a man is to preach well, it is not enough for him to preach duties and relations; it is not enough for him to preach the analysis of human thought and feeling; it is not enough for him to preach all the inflections of experience in human life: there must be such a development of the Divine as shall make itself the center of the preacher's power.

And take note that, in developing the character of God, it is not enough for you to unfold a character that is strong, and just, and wise. You must so present the idea of God as to make men love him. And although you may plead that the carnal man has no aptitude by nature for the comprehension of divine things; though you may plead that there are traits, attributes, qualities, in the Divine nature, and features in the Divine government, which will naturally repel selfishness and pride in man (all of which is true, — more true than we can imagine), nevertheless, the Divine character is altogether lovely; and there are corresponding traits in man which stand over against every one of its great elements. It *is* in the power of man to come into sympathy with them. There are adaptations in him which, when quickened by the effluent Spirit of God, draw him toward that Spirit. There are in the human mind predispositions and powers which adapt it to an experience of the feeling of love to God. That

men do not often use these, and that they cannot easily use them, does not touch the question; for, under the influence of the Divine Spirit which goes with your work of preaching, there *is* that in man which enables him to see and to love what is lovely in God.

Preaching, then, has a twofold object: namely, to develop the character of God so as, first, to make men see how unlovely is the manner of their own life; and then to attract them and inspire them with aspiration toward the loveliness of the Divine. And I shall speak to you this afternoon especially on the subject of preaching God, or, more explicitly, on the subject of the true mode of presenting the nature of God to men so that they may understand it and love it.

MEN'S IDEAS OF GOD: THE TRUE LOVERS.

When you go into your respective parishes, it will not do for you to take your own class-feeling along with you. It will not do for you to take it for granted, unthinkingly, that everybody has about your state of mind in regard to God. It becomes a part of your duty, if you are a wise pastor, to investigate and find out just what is the condition of those among whom you are to labor. I think your experience will be about this, in ordinary parishes: you will find, first, a rare few who love with a love which really overmasters every other feeling, — which, like sunlight, shines down and gives color to every other affection, surrounding all, penetrating all, mounting higher than all, and making itself the center of life, — natures that have this true appreciation of God, bear it about with them day and night, and can say, "Lord, whom have I

in heaven but thee? and who is there on earth that I desire in comparison with thee?"

There are persons whose thought of God is perpetual music to them. In the morning, at noontide, and in the evening, they are still with God. Their thoughts rise as naturally to him as vapors rise to the drawing of the sun. The number of these, however, is very, very small; and they are found mostly among women, or among men in whom the emotional or woman-nature is large. They are not often found among practical men, or men of a speculative turn of mind. Once in a while, in a rare case, like that of Jonathan Edwards, who possessed a comprehensive, speculative nature, there is that experience of the recognition of the Divine, the ever-presence of God, which enables one to say that all his life long he has walked with God; but as I have already said, such cases are very infrequent.

CONVENTIONALISTS.

You will find, next, a great many who will talk as if they had this experience, and perhaps even think they have, while they have it not; that is to say, there springs up, under the constant ministration of the gospel, a peculiar form of conventionalism, such that persons, who know what their duty is, talk as if the fulfillment of that known duty, after which they are striving, were their actual condition, "with such qualifications and limitations, of course, as belong to poor human nature," they say. If you scrutinize and go behind the conventional expressions which are used, you will generally find that in those who even honestly use them there is no such sense of an ever-present God,

in beauty and glory, as really fires and fills their souls, and illumines their experience.

GENERAL BELIEVERS.

Next, you will find (and in larger numbers) those who have an intellectual conception of God, — well-educated men and women, — who now and then are kindled into a glow by that conception; who, under the excitement of special griefs and sorrows, or under the stimulus of peculiar joys, or under the influence of protracted meetings or other unusual occasions, or in consequence of those rare conjunctions which occur, and which light up everything and fill everything with glory, — as does this day from out of the bosom of winter, — who, under such circumstances, they know not how nor why, have distinct conceptions of God and of his attributes, so co-ordinated that all their objections are answered, and they do come to have a general faith in God. But it is not a God *present* that they conceive of. It is God, but it is not *Immanuel*, — it is, not *God present with us*. These, as I remarked, form a much larger class than the others of whom I spoke.

THE RESPECTABLE MAJORITY.

Next to them is a still larger class, that constitute the great middle portion of society, as they will of your parish, namely, those who have, in the main, only about this conception of God, and of his character and administration: that there is the heaven above; the earth beneath; the succession of the seasons; the framework of universal government; and, above all these, One who made them, and wound them up, and rolled

them out, and keeps them agoing, and takes care of them. To them God is the great Functionary of the universe. Sometimes, in their estimation, he is Architect ; he is Machinist, sometimes ; he is Administrator, sometimes. They regard him as the One who *does* everything. They look upon him very much as we look upon the "government" at Washington, as having not much personality, but a great deal of function. It seems to me that such is the abiding state of mind in regard to the Divinity among what we call the respectable and reasonable class in the community. They have no great distinctness of thought concerning God. They think of him as the performer of great functions, rather than as a person.

HOME-HEATHEN.

Then comes the great under-class, a nebulous-minded people, who neither know nor think much about God. You will be surprised to find how many there are of them. You will be surprised to find how many there are of them in New Haven. I have noticed that the worst people are in New England, as well as the best. I have noticed, for instance, that if you take the class of skeptics, they are more malignant and viperous, a hundred times, in New England, than they are in New Orleans. The pressure of moral feeling is so great here that if men do not submit to it, it crowds them down, and at bottom they oppose it and resent it, and bring against it everything that is hard in New England resistance. There is an intensity and vitality to their opposition which is fearful, sometimes.

Then there is also an ignorance in New England, I

think, such as you will hardly find anywhere else. It may not be so right where you live, nor just where your mission school is, perhaps; but not far from your vicinity it is so. If you search all the neighborhood around, you will find men that are ignorant enough. You do not need to go a great way from home to be among the heathen. If you take the trouble to look up those who are degraded, and you regard every man in the township as worthy of your acquaintance, and you gauge him, and sound his intellectual state and moral consciousness, and find what level he stands on, you will be astonished at the number of those who live not only without hope, but literally without God in the world.

Here, then, is your work laid out for you as a preacher of the gospel. You may have a primary relation to the Church; but no matter what community you are settled in, you are settled for the sake of that community; and you are to bear your distributive part of the labor which needs to be performed outside of church walls. You are to preach the great central truth of the universe of God so that it shall be made known to the ignorant, and be made more intelligible to those who know him already, although you can be but an auxiliary to those who have an intellectual conception of the Divine nature. You have an important work in preaching to those who think of God merely in his functions; but still more important is your work in behalf of that great under-class which represents, I might almost say, the *detritus* of society.

HOW TO PREACH GOD.

I merely allude to these things. The question which I purpose to discuss this afternoon is, simply: How shall the character of God be presented, not to yourselves, but to others, in such a way that they shall accept this great ideal, this invisible fact, this truth, which lies outside of the sphere of the ordinary senses? That is a theme which is worth your pondering.

HIS PERSONALITY TO BE REALIZED.

A personal sense of God, then, you are to beget among the people of your charge.

In doing this, you are to bear in mind that in moral things, as in esthetics, as in mathematics, as in poetry, as in oratory, as in any department in which the mind acts, men have different degrees of recipiency. That which is easy for one man is often very difficult for another, owing to the difference in their framework, or else owing to depravities by which the moral sense has been lowered in tone or almost obliterated. Therefore, you will succeed almost without effort with some while you will succeed with others only by very great labor. With many the task will be long and severe.

You should not go into this work with the consciousness that you are to get up a series of sermons, say, on the attributes of God, discussing first all his natural attributes, and secondly, all his moral attributes, for you may preach on the natural and moral attributes of God, and not preach God at all. If you were to go into the consideration of the Divine attributes you would have so many discussions of so many questions

of mental philosophy that you would fail to unfold the idea of a *present* God, of whom these are economic elements. Your task is not alone, as you will see, to discuss those qualities which belong to the universal mind, but to succeed in presenting this abstract, *ideal* Being in such a way that he shall be a *real* Being to those who hear you.

HIS EXISTENCE NOT TO BE ARGUED.

I have not, therefore, much opinion of attempts to prove the existence of God. I doubt whether any man will ever be won from skepticism by having the existence of God proved to him. I doubt it because I doubt whether the evidence of God's existence comes to our sensuous reason. If it does, I think it comes remotely, and as an auxiliary to an impression that has already been established on other grounds. My own feeling is that you may very safely assume the existence of God, and that, having assumed it, your chief work in this direction will be to *illustrate the Divine nature*. There is at the bottom a moral consciousness in mankind such that when you shall have skillfully and correctly unfolded the true character of God, especially as pertaining to personality, the mind will naturally accept it.

There is no use of demonstrating to men that there is music in one of Mozart's or Beethoven's symphonies. *Play it*, and I will defy them to get rid of saying that there is music in it. They recognize it at once.

You may fail to demonstrate by logical argument that you are good-natured; but if you stay with an ugly man all day, and never lose your temper, and repay sweetness for sourness, and kindness for unkind-

ness, he will be obliged to acknowledge that you are good-natured. You could not prove to him in words that you had a good-natured disposition, but he could not resist the conviction that you had, if you were in his presence, and were uniformly good-natured.

There is such a thing as the action of being on being. We recognize it in lower life; and my belief is, that it belongs still more essentially to the higher life. When the being of God itself is unfolded by the Divine Spirit, and made luminous, there is a moral consciousness in the mind of man which cannot help responding. I believe that this moral consciousness is universal, and that in the presence of it argument falls to the ground as needless.

I have, besides this, a conviction that without a proper appeal to this moral consciousness, the mere intellect being addressed, arguments to prove that there is a God will have no more effect than hailstones on Gibraltar.

There is no objection to a man's arguing the subject of the existence of God from the pulpit, if he is pretty sure that his people believe it; but unless he knows that it is an accepted truth among them, I would advise him not to argue it. As has been said by Joubert (whose wisdom is of a high order, and whose writings I wish could be translated), there is danger of exciting unbelief by attempting to argue things which are not within the sphere of argument, the effect being to stir up combativeness in men, and the gladiatorial spirit. A man may be led to meet your arguments, — by which, as it were, you defy investigation, — with a skepticism which otherwise would slumber.

MAN'S MORAL NEED TO BE MET.

I would recommend you not to attempt, then, unless you are pretty sure of your people, to argue that there is a God, nor to attempt to prove his existence. I should assume it, always. But there should be a presentation of God which should meet that moral consciousness of which I have spoken. I know not that I shall make myself quite understood, but I think there can be a presentation of God made which all men's hearts, at one time or another, would crave fervently, and of which they would say, "Let it be true! *Let it be true!*" I can conceive of such a presentation of God, as monarchical and despotic, that all good men would say, "O, let it *not* be true!" There is surely such a way of making known God, in the Lord Jesus Christ, that at one time or another men under burdens, men in sorrow, men whose hopes have been blighted, men who are without sympathy in life, lonely men, troubled men, dissatisfied men, men aching with pride and selfishness, — first or last, men like these shall be buoyed up by it, it shall be to them like the coming on of spring to the patient in her chamber, and every aspiration in them shall say, "O, *let there be* such a God! *I need him.*"

At such a time as this, when science is tending to undermine men's faith, when so many influences are drawing us away from a conception of God, and planting doctrine on sensuous foundations (where it cannot be demonstrated), the wise course, it seems to me, is to lift up such a conception of the Divine nature that everything that is true and noble in men shall long for

it. God should be made so altogether lovely in the preacher's presentation of him, that the world will not consent to have him dethroned from their ideas or from their faith.

THREE ELEMENTS OF PRESENTATION.

There are three things, then, that you should seek to do in attempting to present God to men aright, — first, to establish his *personality*; second, to illustrate his *disposition*; third, to give and keep a sense of his *presence*. These three elements — personality, disposition or character, and ever-presence — it is important to unfold, so that God shall be a *God with us*, and not a God afar off from us.

THE DIVINE PERSONALITY.

As regards the Divine personality, I speak of it as distinguished, in the first place, from pantheism, or from those things which tend toward an impersonal God. It is not necessary for me to go into a discussion of the idea that God is the universe, as he has been represented to be. I only say that this idea is a thing so scattered, so absolutely unconcentrated, that it is in effect a mere atmosphere, and an atmosphere so rarefied that men cannot breathe it. It is absolutely without moral effect. And, although it may seem to be very harmless, yet, to say "no God" is to me no worse than to say "impersonal God."

Next to this, I rank what are called the theories of "the unknowable" in God. Men hold, almost *a priori*, that the Divine nature must be so very high above ours, that it is not knowable by us. No person at all

instructed in the Word of God ever teaches that we can perfectly understand the Almighty ; but cannot the human mind grasp so much of the Divine nature as to know it in kind, if not in degree ? May we not know the quality of God's being, without knowing its quantity ? May we not know what water is, when we see a drop ? May I not know what the Atlantic Ocean is made of, by seeing a tumblerful of water ? As far as it goes, a drop is the same as the sea, — the same, not in magnitude, but in quality. The rill that comes running down from the seams of the rock, and the flowing stream that helps to make the gushing river below, and the lake into which the river empties, — all these are types of the ocean ; that is, they tell me what water is. They cannot exactly tell me what shapes it assumes, or what its power is ; but from these I can learn its constituent elements just as I could from the Atlantic itself. And although there is much that is unknowable in regard to the Divine nature, yet there are elements of it which may be known, and which, being known, make it a power on the hearts and consciences of men.

To say to me that a thing is of a different color from anything that we know ; to tell me that its color is magnificent, but that it is not white, nor black, nor red, nor green, nor blue, nor yellow, nor purple ; to tell me that it comes nearer to red than anything else, but that it does not come near to that at all ; to tell me that it comes near to something that it does not resemble, but that it would resemble if it were something very different from what it is, — would be not only to give me no conception of the thing, but to

destroy any conception of it which I might already have. And to say to me of the Divine nature, that it comes near to intellection, but that it is not intellection; that it comes near to the will, but that it is not the will; that it comes near to benevolence, but that it is not benevolence, is to annihilate my conception of that nature. These terms which seem to describe the Supreme Being to men have the effect of destroying the influence on their minds of the representation which is made of him.

THE USES OF ANALYSIS.

Personality, as distinguished from abstract analysis, is one of the ends which you are to seek. Do not misunderstand me by thinking that I am disposed to dissuade you from a philosophical analysis of the Divine nature. It is a part of mental philosophy, and it belongs to a scientific study of that philosophy; but at the same time an analysis of it takes away its life-form.

You may analyze a flower, in order to understand it; but if there were only one flower in the universe, as soon as you analyzed it there would no longer be one, — it would be gone. If you take it to pieces to examine it, and if you submit it to the laboratory, you have the elements of it, but not its organic structure. Certainly you have not its life. That has been taken away by the analysis. If there are plenty of flowers, and, after you have analyzed one, you go back to the life-form, then you gain; but in the simple analysis you lose. In merely analyzing God you lose, because you place him in the category of abstract ideas. You take away his vitality, as I might say, so that he is no

more a Divine Being. Thus, when you argue that God is the sum of love, the sum of benevolence, the sum of universal power, you may properly take every one of those elements and analyze it; but you should not deceive yourself by supposing that in that way you are making known a personal God. It is not until, having gone through the process of analysis, you begin the work of synthesis, and bring back these qualities into a personal form, that you have increased the knowledge of men concerning God. It is a personal God, made up of these things, that you want to bring before the minds of men.

Look for a moment at what would take place. I ask an artist to paint for me the portrait of a man. I say to him: "I will describe the man as he is, and I want you to represent him on canvas. First, he has a bone system,—mark that down, Mr. Painter; secondly, he has a muscular system,—add that; he also has an arterial and venous system,—add that too; then he has a nerve system, which begins at the head, and runs all the way down through the man,—put that in; he has likewise a forehead, eyes, a nose, a mouth, and ears,—these are to be included." Could an artist paint a portrait from such an inventory of qualities? Could he represent any part of a man who was described to him in that way?

A man attempts to describe to me the woman of his love, saying, "She is five feet, four inches high; she has brown hair; she has eyes—two of them; she has a nose; she has a mouth; she has ears; she smells with her nose, and eats with her mouth, and sees with her eyes, and hears with her ears; she has feet, and she

walks on them ; she has hands, and she uses them ; she has a heart, — oh, what a heart ! Do you wonder that I admire her ? ”

How vague such a description would be ! It may be a very superficial analysis, but it is all the worse if you carry it out a great way further ; for analysis is taking a thing apart ; it is taking it out of organization and personality ; and if you cannot produce a sense of personality by analyzing a human being, and enumerating his different parts, do not think that by partitioning the Divine nature for the purpose of making God known you can produce a sense of his personality. For to say to me that God is wise, and just, and good, does not give me any very particular idea of him.

I will describe to you two men who are as different as they possibly can be, — General Grant and General Sherman ; and I will say that both of them have very great fortitude, that both of them have very great patience, running even to obstinacy ; that both of them have very sharp and clear intellects ; that both of them have foresight ; that both of them have very great sympathy with their fellow-men ; that both of them are very skillful ; and that both of them are apt to be victorious. Those terms describe them both generically, and yet they are as different as it is possible for them to be in other respects. General Grant is square, short, and thick ; and General Sherman is long, lean, and lathy. General Grant is very taciturn ; and General Sherman is never silent, — I suppose he talks in his sleep ! General Grant thinks everything out, and General Sherman sees things by intuition. General Grant is secretive, and General Sherman is open as a

child. You must go further than the *genus*, or you do not describe men.

Herein lies one of the great mistakes into which preachers fall. They do not produce a sense of the personality of God, because they preach analytic views, analytic views, analytic views, of God all the time.

Now, when you have indoctrinated men, by analysis, in the character of God, and in the qualities or elements into which it is analyzed, if you have the power, by synthesis, of bringing them back and combining them again, that is all very well. Or, to change the figure, if, instead of forever distributing type, you distribute it simply because you wish every letter to be in its proper department in order that it may be easily found when it is wanted for new combinations, then you may bring it back, by composition, and spell out that incomprehensible Name which the Jews revered, and which the Scriptures disclosed. For, in looking at God, two processes are employed, — first, that of separating the qualities of his nature, so that each shall be distinct from every other; and secondly, that of gathering them together again, and forming them into a unit: then you have a Person who stands out by himself, and who can never be confounded with another person.

PERSONALITY NOT FUNCTIONAL CONDITION.

God's personality, too, should be presented as distinct from his functions; for, one may lose entirely the sense of the Divine personality, by turning the mind, or having it turned almost continuously, upon what God does, or what God says. That is, if you say of God that he is Creator, that he is Lawgiver,

that he is Upholder, that he is Judge, that he is Punisher, you say only what has been said, and said fitly, of Jupiter, what has been said of Brahma, and what may be properly said of any semi-civilized deity. Such deities are conceived of as having performed various essential functions; and you cannot bring Jehovah distinctly before the mind in that way. You cannot in that way produce a sense of the difference between Jove and Jehovah. It does not represent a person toward whom one can fulfill the command, "Thou shalt love."

No man, I suppose, ever yet fell in love with a problem. Men may like problems, but no man can love them. No man ever yet fell in love with a proposition in mental philosophy; no man ever fell in love with an abstraction; no man ever fell in love with a conception of power; but men fall in love with dispositions. And the character of God is to be so preached that all elements of wisdom and of power will stand around his great central disposition, which should make him something admirable, to be thought of, to be followed, and to be obeyed. With such a presentation of God you can love, but without it you cannot love.

When the elements of the Divine nature are known and are brought into personality, there will be great power in preaching. A peculiarity of the Bible is, that it contains these elements in itself.

COMPLETE CONCEPTION OF GOD IMPOSSIBLE.

I had occasion, last week, to call your attention to that character of God which is presented in the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus. Another description of God

is given in the Old Testament, which I think is extraordinary when you regard the time in which it emerged, namely, the description which God gives of himself. In one place he says, "I am that I am"; and in another place, "I am he." Abstraction can be carried no further than it is carried in these passages; and it seems to me something astounding, far back in the time of that pictorial people, — that people of an old Semitic language, in which everything was graphic and dramatic, — to see these declarations of God: that he transcends knowledge, and that he exists in his own absolutely unapproachable totality, as where he says, substantially, "I am myself; I am all that I am; I am because I am; look upon me, indescribable and wonderful past all pronounciation."

Continually there are such statements, and others, declaring that we cannot know God unto perfection; that he is, in every respect, so large and so good that no man can rise to a conception of him. This is declared, after the manifestation of God in Christ Jesus, and even down as late as the time of Paul, who says that we can only see God as through a glass, darkly. We have the declaration in the first Epistle of John, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." In other words, the declaration is, "We are allied to him as sons," and yet we have very little intimation of what it is to have such a Father. The largeness of it, the fullness of it, and the grandeur of it, transcend our comprehension.

Bring me out of the Music Hall in Boston, one by one, the magnificent array of stops in that great organ,

and lay them on the trial-board, and let a man blow every one of them, first sounding the wald-flute, next the diapason, and then the others in their order, and I can form some imagination of what the effect would be if they were all put together and sounded, — especially if I had heard other organs ; and yet, when I go at twilight in the evening, where some John Zundel, who thinks with his hands, whose brains run down to the ends of his fingers, and who is pouring out, for his own comfort and enjoyment, devotional thoughts and feelings through the tones of that grand instrument, with all its combined power and richness, then I say, in my amazement, “Fool ! fool ! that I should have supposed that I had ever heard this organ !” I had heard every one of its stops, and had some conception of what it would be to hear them after they were put together ; but when I heard them after they were put together, I found that the conception which I had was entirely inadequate.

When I go up to heaven, — if it please God to give me admission to his presence, — I shall know what love is. I do know what love is ; for is there no love on earth ? I know what justice is ; is there no justice on earth ? I know what generosity is ; is there no generosity on earth ? But when I stand in Zion, and before God, and see what infinite justice, infinite generosity, and infinite love are, — when I see that they have no bounds, no latitude nor longitude, and that they have endless diversities and combinations, — then there will rise upon my thought a conception of God’s majesty and riches and power and grandeur, such that I shall say, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the

ear, but now mine eye seeth thee"; but I shall not say, "I repent in dust and ashes"; for I shall be lifted up by the hand of God's love, I shall be called his own, and I shall be able to look him in the face, and stand as his redeemed child, spirit to spirit. I do know much of God; and yet, comparatively speaking, I know nothing of him. I do understand God, and yet he passes understanding.

So you shall find other passages which go to show that God was revealed to men personally in those old times; but I cannot see how such conceptions of him as then existed came into their minds in any other way except by the infusion of the Divine Spirit. By searching we cannot find out God; but we can find out much about him, — enough to give us something to worship and to love.

RICHNESS OF THE BIBLE METHOD.

See how the Bible represents God, in order to convey an idea of his personality. See how he is brought down to our conditions. See how he walks and rides. See how all things in nature are made to speak of him. See how he produces on the minds of children — Old Testament men — a sense of his personality.

Let any man read the Book of Isaiah and say, if he can, that there has not risen on his imagination a most magnificent conception of a personal God, which has more than any abstraction or any metaphysical creation. There rises a majestic figure before the minds of those who read that book, which fills them with a conception of One whom they can adore.

Sometimes men say that the Old Testament is worn

out. When the heavens are worn out and men no more need to understand God, then the Old Testament may be worn out, but not until then. I hardly hesitate to say that you could not understand the New Testament if it were not for the great and grand background upon which God stands unfolded. The Old Testament is wonderfully adapted to the wants of the mind in childhood and in the savage state, and to the preparation of the mind, all through the different stages of civilization, for the higher condition of human culture. There is nothing like it. And it is a marvel to me, being, as it is, the work, not of one painter but of many, and the illustrations being wrought out by one and another and another, all working together without jar or discord, and the result being a representation of a God so personal that when he is said to perform any function it is a *Person* that is conceived of as performing that function, and the sense of personality, made up of the various Divine attributes, being larger and more influential than those same attributes taken separately.

The fault of men in preaching God is in not producing in their hearers a sense of his personality, although in the Bible the representation of that personality is such that, relatively, all other representations fall into insignificance in the comparison.

LEANNESS OF PHILOSOPHICAL METHODS.

Let any man take the Old Testament, and compare it with the efforts which have been made to represent God by any other method than this. I will not compare it with the efforts of pantheists,—for I will not

argue with mists ; but let any man compare it with the efforts which have been made by Mansel. I do not know whether you have read his lectures. They are admirable ; but in reading them I could not help feeling how weak they came out. It is pitiful to see how faint and feeble is the result of the efforts of a Christian philosopher, who meant to do well, in developing the unknowable.

I could not preach any such God as he and others portray. I had the good fortune to be pitched into the ministry headlong, without anything to do but to make men better, — for really my stock of *theology that I believed in* was very small. I have increased it very much since, but it was meager enough then ; and my business was to do what I could for men, and let theology take care of itself. I had nothing but the Bible to go to ; and I remember times of deep water, when I took what I could get out of the Bible to help people with ; and as I went out to help them, I felt something that demanded an idea of God ; and I fell back on the Old Testament, as well as on the New, for my conceptions of him. In my early ministry I studied to preach God so as to touch the imagination, the reason, and the affections of men ; and I learned to have great respect for that element in preaching which develops steadily and continuously the attributes of the Divine Being in such a way as to give men an idea of a Person that they could love as well as fear.

Now, when I look at writers and scholarly men, and see how they have patched up their ideas of the unknowable, and how they have analyzed God, I feel that

if I had to preach those things in the pulpit I would throw sermon and book under the desk, and would never touch them again.

Look at Herbert Spencer's God. I do not revile Herbert Spencer; many of the stones that will shine out by and by in the completed temple of God will have come from his hands; but I think his writings should be taken as the disciples took the wheat, which they ate, *rubbing it in their hands*. In taking his philosophy you have to take a great deal of straw and chaff, as well as much wheat. As to his presentation of God, it is nothing. It is exactly what the annual joke of our Professor Snell, in Amherst College, was, when he said, "Gentlemen, you will perceive this invisible ball!"

And yet, testing such men and their reasonings, it will be found that they are like the Hiram's that Solomon employed, who wrought in marble, and brass, and silver, and gold, and ivory. They are working, each in his own way, on that building of God which is being carried up through the ages. If you look at that which any one of them is doing by himself, it seems like poor-ness, indeed; but if you take a comprehensive view of that which they are all doing, you will be surprised at the richness of it.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.

Now, there is nothing that will fill your soul like the representations of God in the Old Testament and in the New; and do not separate the Old from the New when you are studying the character of God. You cannot get along without them both. Your Christ

cannot at any other time be such a Christ, nor such a representation of God, as when you see the person of Jehovah as he is described in the Old Testament.

In preaching God, assume the truth of his existence ; and preach so that your people shall see that he is a living Person, with whom they can hold commerce.





IV.

CONCEPTIONS OF THE DIVINITY.

February 19, 1874.

PREACHING OF GOD, A SOURCE OF POWER.

I SPOKE to you yesterday, young gentlemen, upon your office as presenting to the minds of congregations the true idea of God. As that was said in Scripture to be the center of all truth, the starting-point and end, also, of revelation itself, so it must be the very center, and also the circumference, of your ministerial work; and a right presentation of the Divine character will fill your hands with power. Without that you may not lack power, but you will have it only in the lower ranges. I say this, not theoretically, but out of my own experience. I came to the knowledge of God stumblingly and gradually; but of nothing am I more sure now.

When I discourse for a length of time, analyzing people's characters, criticising various lines of their conduct, and setting forth the motives and the fruit of right or wrong doing in any direction, but still dealing with human nature in human conditions, at the first the congregation listen with keen interest and doubtless

with some profit; but after a little time the interest falls off. And this is because the themes discussed do not rise very much above the lines of life which measure men's lower growth, and deal with what may be called *the inferior natural laws*. But when from that level I have been drawn to go to those themes which involve considerations of the Infinite, of the Eternal, of God in all the elements which belong to the Divine idea, I have found a decided difference of atmosphere, a marked difference of power; and not only that, but there is a lasting quality, that inheres in discourses which deal largely with these supereminent topics.

MEANING OF PERSONALITY.

I said to you yesterday afternoon that there were three things which must be considered in order to rightly instruct your parishioners, namely, the personality of God, the Divine disposition or character, and the sense of the ever-presence of God with men; and I discussed, somewhat at length, the first of these elements, — God's personality. I was asked at the close of the lecture what I meant by *personality*. I said I would answer that question to-day. I do not purpose to give a definition of it in its philosophically disputed or discussed sense.

What I mean by *personality* is a being, separate from the effects which he produces; a being, intelligent, with moral attributes, — with will and purpose in and of himself; in the case of God, a Being who centrally stands related to the universe in the same way in which men stand related to the physical and social world which surrounds them here. A man is a person in distinction

from a tree, a cliff, a house, a stone, or anything of that kind, in this, that he is filled with emotive life, with will, and with moral purpose. But he is also distinct from other men, in that he has an individual organization; that he has his own separateness from other organizations. And what I mean by the Divine personality is, that it is a Being who thinks, feels, wills, and governs, not in the sense in which nature does, but in the sense in which a voluntary sentient creature does,—in a higher sense, too, but in the same general sense.

THE HEIGHT AND THE HUMILITY OF GOD.

Now, in attempting to construct, or rather in attempting to infuse steadily into the minds of your hearers, the true idea of God, make it real to them by bringing it down to their understanding. And you are to remember two things, both of which are Scriptural: First, that the Scripture lifts up a conception of God, and carries it high. There is in the Scriptures most distinctly a metaphysical element, if you choose to call it so,—a philosophical element at any rate; and the ideal is exceedingly high and is clothed with every attribute of power and grandeur and beauty and glory. Secondly, when you have carried up the conception of God in this way, you must counteract it by precisely the opposite tendency, or else you will lift God out of the reach of men's vision, and out of the sphere of human sympathy; and, to all intents and purposes, you will remove the idea of him from men's view.

You will find, I think, in the history of the revelation of God, that in the Old Testament Scriptures, both early and late, there were two streams of repre-

sentation, one of which was all the time exalting God, and the other all the time bringing him back to men from out of that exaltation ; showing that this Being of grandeur was nevertheless in intimate personal relations with men, and that in some sense he humbled himself, in order to be represented by the homeliest and commonest of things, so that while men had an idea of perfect wisdom, perfect integrity, perfect purity, or holiness, or righteousness, whichever you may choose to call it, while they felt that he was from eternity to eternity, and while the ideal circle was swept with the most magnificent conceptions of spiritual and moral power, at the same time all that grandeur kissed men, caressed them, nursed them, thought for them, felt for them, wept for them, and laid itself down for them.

Those two processes are carried along very nearly together in the Old Testament ; and they must be kept in mind by you, if you are to be able ministers. You must not carry up the idea of God so as to have it evaporate. Do not make God so holy, or holy with such a conception, that he shall be separated from men. There must be a perpetual re-incarnation of the divine thought.

HUMAN ELEMENTS TO REPRESENT THE DIVINE.

Here comes in the great principle of anthropomorphism, — if you will excuse the length of the word, which I did not make. There has been very much said against the employment of anthropomorphism, — the representation of God in human forms, or by human conditions ; it is a principle which has been very much contested ; and yet I affirm that without it there is no

such thing as making God known to men. It underlies all the Scriptures, Old and New, — the teaching in respect to God ; and just as soon as you attempt to represent the Divine nature in any other way, you go off into mysticism, into vague generalities that have no power in them, and that are like clouds which the wind makes, without rain. You will be obliged to represent God by the things which you know in yourself, or in your surroundings.

It becomes very important that you should know how to use this principle ; because, while a thing may be right in its theory, it may be in its practice badly applied and most mischievous. It was this principle that led to the formation of the deities of nations that were unillumined by a heavenly inspired record. They took the things which they knew most about, — patience, courage, endurance, heroism, glory, — and framed them into a person, and called this, for instance, Hercules, their god. They made a poor god, but they used the right principle in making him ; that is to say, they did the best that they could. They exalted into an infinite sphere, and into supreme power, those parts of human nature which they thought the most of. And when afterwards there were other parts of civilization developed, and these were clustered about the Divine idea, the same principle was carried on.

They had a poor god, not because anthropomorphism is wrong, but because they took the lowest parts of men, — those parts which had been developed, — and made their god out of these. They made him of base materials, taking human passions and fleshly conditions, and transferring them to some mountain-top, and mak-

ing them regnant over all the earth. But if they could have taken the thought of the spirit of God as it has been developed in patriarchs, in prophets, in disciples, in martyrs, in holy men of old and in later days; if they had known how to cull and sift out the higher elements of manhood, and how to combine them around some appropriate center, — they would have proceeded in the true direction of constructing in the human mind an idea of God.

HUMAN SYMBOLISM OF GOD.

We are to recollect that all we can do is to obtain what may be called a symbol, — something which shall bring God to our imagination and our thought. No man can see the whole of the Divine nature; no man can represent all of it; no man can, by any process either within or without himself, do more than to make that which shall resemble God, as an idea is resembled by letters, which have the power of making the thing itself spring up in the man when he sees the word which they compose. The letters l-o-v-e and h-a-t-e, alphabetically, separated, detached, have no power nor significance; but if they are combined to form the words *love* and *hate*, when they strike the eye one flame of thought and feeling bursts out on one side, and another and different flame of thought and feeling on another side. Being brought together thus, they have the power of symbols, and convey ideas to our minds.

So, though men may readily construct the Divine idea, they must construct it of things which are in the nature of symbols, and which only approach the reality. And this Divine idea will differ in magnitude and

purity according to the character of the elements which are employed in its construction, according to their combinations, and according to the additions that are made to them from time to time.

I am sure that all there is of God is not simply that which can come through the eye-gate, through the ear-gate, through any one part, or through all the parts, of the human structure. I believe that, while we have much thought of God which can be comprehended by the human mind, there is much more which the human mind cannot comprehend. I believe that there are "thrones, and principalities, and powers," which we shall understand when we come to our higher development, but which are hidden from us now; just as there is that in a father which the child does not understand, but which he grows up to a knowledge of, little by little. Yet, so far as the child does understand the father, his understanding of him is real and is right, — only the father is much more and far better than the child thinks or can appreciate.

INVISIBLE LIGHT.

I was powerfully struck, my breath was almost taken away, by the inspiration of thought which came to my mind when Professor Tyndall showed that, aside from the beams of light that were visible, and which we had recognized as belonging to light, there were also other parts of light which we never had recognized, and which we had no sense to detect, — when he showed that there were qualities of light which man was without any faculty directly to appreciate, and the existence of which he could only know from the fact that when

it passed through the prism and showed the spectrum there was chemical effect produced beyond the visible spectrum, which indicated the existence of elements there that could not be detected by the sight.

We had investigated this subject, and we thought we knew what was the composition of light; but here was this additional truth developed on one side, and very likely there will be other truths developed on other sides. Undoubtedly there will be truths of light and of other elements discovered which we have not yet comprehended.

Now, if this be so in the material realm, how much more true must it be in the spiritual! How easily may we suppose that there are elements of truth respecting the existence of God Almighty, respecting his character and his ways, which we do not see! Although there is much that belongs to his nature that we can see dimly, yet there is something more, and something brighter than all that, which we do not see, but which we shall see by and by.

When I am asked, "How shall we use the idea of God which we have constructed so as to affect different persons in different experiences?" I reply that we must, having by reason and imagination prepared the materials for the Divine idea, separate them from that which arises from man's weakness and imperfection, so that the development of that idea will go with the development of the man himself.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

No man sees more of God than he has in himself. There must be in him those elements through which

he comes to a knowledge or experience of the Divine.

THE OLD TESTAMENT SYMBOLISM.

I purpose now to show you how, using this method in a much larger sphere, the Old Testament teachers did produce in the minds of the Hebrew people a conception of God.

First, as I have said, there was the grand Ideal, the metaphysical Spirit, the Cause, the Sovereignty ; but what sort of a Being was this Ruler who was lifted up above time and chance, and all counsel, and help of every kind ? Take notice how this idea of God was constructed in men so that he should be brought very near to them. In the first place, names and illustrations from every side of human knowledge were gathered together, showing how to reach men's consciences, and showing likewise that all creation was needed in order, by the help of its many particulars, to work out a conception, faint though it would be, of that which really was infinite.

First come the things which are known by our senses. Did it ever occur to you to go through the Old Testament, and see how much use is made there, in describing God, or the Divine operations, of the seasons, of storms, of clouds, of the wind, of the sea, of mountains and their caverns, of grass, of things that belong to summer and winter, of things that are organic and that grow, or of things that are inorganic and un-growing ? All these things were employed abundantly, and each one, if I may so say, with an exquisite adaptation that is very remarkable.

For instance, God is described as being a "Rock"; and, at once, in your thought, he is a Defence; and firmness, hardness, and inexpugnableness are the qualities which you associate with him. But a rock is something more than a defence. We have the expression, "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Ah! then, it is not any longer that God is merely strong and enduring; there is an element of protection, of helpfulness, in his strength, which throws its shadow upon men.

What are clouds to you? To me they are babies' baskets; they are flocks of sheep; they are caravans going through the desert air; to me they are vast cities and battlements, as they stand piled up along the horizon. Clouds are what to you? Signs of rain,—weather-gauges, perhaps; they are this, that, or the other, according to the cast of his mind who observes them. What were they to the Hebrew? God's chariots. They had a meaning, when he looked upon them, which took him right back to God.

What is a storm to you? An equatorial current, drifting northward,—the compensation of some other current going southward. What is it to your neighbor? The result of some condition of the atmosphere, in which moisture and cold meet. What were storms to the old Hebrew? What were thunder and lightning? What were the convulsions of nature? They were the stepping forth of God's feet, which shook the earth. The lightning was the flash of his eye. The thunder was his voice as he spoke to men. Rivers, mountains, trees, told of the presence of the Lord in the whole earth. To the Hebrew, matter, organic or

inorganic, was the element from which attributes were derived that, by transfer, came to be associated with the Divine nature.

Living animals were employed in the same way. God is called a Lion, an Eagle, and a Dove. He is spoken of, by way of symbolization, as an Ox and as a Serpent. So you will find that the whole domestic economy, in relation to the animal kingdom, was brought, in one way and another, to bring certain suggestions, and to make certain contributions, to the growing conception of the invisible God.

The processes of industry were employed in like manner. God was a Husbandman to the minds of the Jews. It would be considered very irreverent if men were to point to heaven and speak of "that Farmer up there"; and yet the old Jews spoke of God as a Husbandman. He was a Vine-dresser; he was a Gardener; he was a Vintner; he was a Shepherd, who went out with flocks. These things were alphabetic, as it were, and spelled out the Jewish conception of God.

The same is true in the category of public officers. God is King; he is Judge; he is Captain; he is Ruler; he is Governor of the universe; and these titles are not unmeaning or accidental: they are transferred from ideas that have been elaborated from the experience and observation of men, and that have been used towards filling up the great metaphysical circle in which there are infinite steps, and which has infinite containing power. Each man is all the time making himself familiar with some conception of God, by ascribing to him qualities wrought out by his own earthly experience.

LIMITATION OF SYMBOLS.

I may say here, in passing, what I shall have occasion to say more at large by and by, that in regard to much of what goes into the theory of the Divine law, the transfer has been unwisely made. It has been urged that God, being a Lawgiver, must do so and so; but it would be unfair to hold him responsible for everything that belongs to objects to which he is likened. For instance, it would be unfair to impute to him all the qualities which are in the lion. *Lion* means strength, it means courage, it means irresistible impetus; and these qualities are worthy to be carried up and ascribed to God; but all the rest of the lion had better be omitted from the elements which are employed for symbolizing God.

Ox means enduring strength; and in that sense it would be appropriate to use it as signifying continuity of the Divine will in natural law; but beefsteaks for food, ox-hide for shoes, and a swinging tail to keep flies off, would not be appropriate things with which to represent the attributes of God. We do not want the lower uses of those symbols which are derived from nature. There is a spinal cord running through them, there is a cerebral spot in them; and that is the only part which you are to take. In eating oysters you take the meat, but not the shell. In printing, it is just the face of the type that is wanted to show the character of the impression. And there are given qualities, particular elements, certain relations of natural objects, which add to the conception of the Divine nature that is formed in men's minds; and these are to be pre-

served; but the inferior parts are to be shredded off. You are to take the various symbols of God which you find in the Bible and elsewhere, and treat them as you do a banana when you eat it, taking off the skin; or as you do an apple, throwing away the peel.

SOCIAL SYMBOLS.

In the relations of man to man, we find that which enables us to conceive of God as father. There is nobody who does not know what *fatherhood* means; nor is there anything nobler than the idea which we derive from it; but you will mark how almost never in the Old Testament is brought in that other word which is sweeter, even, than the name of *father*. This fact indicates the difference between the present and four thousand years ago. If men had thought of *mother* as we do now, if the usages of society had given her the relative position which she has to-day, then we should have had something of motherhood as well as something of fatherhood transferred to the conception or building up of the Divine nature. I think it was the want of that element which created the Virgin Mary, and led men to attempt to bring out somewhere a substitute for it.

God is a Protector to the widow, to the orphan, to the weak; he is a Shelter to the exposed; he is a Deliverer to the captive; he is a Guide to the lost; he is a Comforter to those who mourn; he is a Physician to those who are sick. These are all relationships drawn from the social conditions of man. When refined and sanctified, and carried up to the Divine, each makes one more letter in the spelling out of the incommunicable name of God.

Domestic relations ; relations of the household ; relations of husband and wife, of parents and children, and of brothers and sisters, — these are all a part of the primitive elements in this grand transfer from earth to God, of the qualities, that are wrought out by human experience.

WHY THESE ELEMENTS HAVE BEEN USED.

All matter, then, all mind, all relationships in society, all growths of nature, all development of civilization, all business, all government, all outworkings of affection, — these things have been prepared and raised to the higher sphere, as interpreters of qualities, that work more and more by development in the Divine nature.

To say that God is infinitely holy, infinitely righteous, is to say a thing which to us is far grander than it could have been at the beginning of the world. We know what holiness is ; but what was holiness to them ? What could they know of holiness, who bought their wives and sold their children ? Where men made no distinction between living beings and property, and regarded their offspring as of no more importance than colts or calves, what meaning could they attach to those terms which implied delicacy, self-sacrifice, love, disinterestedness, long-suffering, and magnanimity ? These things could not have been understood by them ; they have to be taught to men. And they cannot be taught by revelation ; for words do not mean anything to men until there is developed in them that which those words represent. So a gradual process of evolution was necessary. Here is where the principle of anthropomorphism comes in ; and the whole round of

nature was employed to lift up the conception of Divinity, in order that he might come near to men, and be understandable by them.

GROWTH IN CONCEPTIONS OF GOD.

When this process had gone on to a certain extent, then the world began to feel the movement which has come on down to our day. When you reach the Psalms and the Prophets (minor and major), and the Book of Job, then you see how this Being, thus formed by the national mind, develops little by little, and more clearly, until he begins to speak as a Teacher and as a Magistrate; and then you see him pointing out the lines of duty, and using the imagination, using reason and hope, using pain and joy; then you see him treating men no longer as animals in the stall, but as beings far above the level where the race began; and then you see that he begins to display divine intelligence. One can scarcely read such passages as are contained in that Book of Job, after pursuing the line of thought which I have attempted to disclose this afternoon, without recognizing the correctness of this view, of which I have given but the merest outline, not going into that detail of which it is susceptible, if time would permit.

Now consider, still further, how this idea, thus gradually formed in the minds of men, has been taught in such a way as to bring it still nearer to them. If you have had a father whom everybody thought well of, and who has been everything to you, you could hardly be touched in any way more quickly than by hearing kindly reference to him. You are greatly pleased if one says to you, "O, I knew your father! Then you

are the son of my old friend. Come, go home with me; come, walk with me; come, I must see you. I knew him well, and loved him." A sense of the honor and dignity and glory of the father is very precious to the child.

Do you recollect Jacob's prayer?

It was not, "O Jehovah"; it was not, "O thou omniscient, omnipotent God"; it was not, "O my metaphysical Superior." It was, "O God of Isaac, my father!" How that made the whole sphere of God ring like a bell in his heart! Did you ever try it? If you never did, then it is because you never have known sin and darkness. I have tried it in deep midnight. There was no God of providence and grace that I could call on; to me the idea of such a God was like mountaintops in mist; but I could say, "O God of my father and of my mother," and he was at hand: and there was brought to me, quick, the sense that in God there was a love which was stronger than my father's, and sweeter than my mother's; and I clasped the idea, and was comforted in it.

What impulse, in a noble nature, is stronger than love for his country, and for those great names which are the honor and the glory of that country, and are its representatives? Do you suppose it was without a reason that the old Jews used to pray, "Lord God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob"? Did not that prayer bring right to their memory and to their sensibility all the things of which the Jew was proud, — the glory of his origin, and the grandeur of all those names that stand up now like mountains in the long stretch backward? The crook of the earth, the bend of time,

never sends their tops down below the horizon ; and when the Jew prayed there was a whole volume of patriotism that gushed into his mind, and interpreted God to him.

See how, throughout the history of the Jewish nation, God was represented in government. See how there are Psalm after Psalm and song after song in which the name of God is celebrated. And see how God is represented as the One who brought the people of Israel out of Egypt, and led them like a flock in the wilderness ; as the one before whom the sea fled, and armies trembled and melted away. See how the Hebrews, all through their method of teaching, represented God through their personal affections, — through their sense of fatherhood and motherhood, through their love of country, and through their pride of race. And ought there not to be something like that yet ?

The idea of God having been inspired in men, and clothed with every noble attribute which was derivable from men's knowledge, it was brought to bear in human conduct. Justice, purity, fidelity, reverence, and righteousness were qualities which were then understood as existing in God ; because the conception of God had little by little been built from specimens of these qualities in a low and imperfect state, sublimated and carried up, which kindled in the hearts of men a truer idea of God than otherwise could have been developed in them.

Take Matthew Arnold. His writings are very pleasant, and they contain a great deal of valuable thought ; but when Mr. Matthew Arnold tells us that there is no personal God, that there is only a stream of tendencies,

and that the Hebrews believed, not in a personal God, but only in those great causes which made for righteousness, I confess I stop. Mr. Arnold has a perfect right to say that he does not believe in a personal God; but in the name of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets of Israel, I protest against his saying that the old Hebrews did not believe in God's personality. He might just as well say that I do not believe in it, that you do not believe in it, that the whole race do not believe in it. That would not be a more audacious thing than the other.

THE BARRENNESS OF ABSTRACT PREACHING.

We are now prepared to consider our own method of preaching and teaching about God to our own people, in these modern days.

In the first place, it is largely the metaphysical and the abstract that we dwell upon in preaching. I have already alluded to that in various ways. I merely allude to it again to make the statement complete. We are accustomed to preach about God in Latinized periphrastic language, in language which represents the last ideas of civilization. Well, that does good, I hope, to educated men, to men who like to indulge in abstract thought; and yet, on the other hand, it leaves in them a great Sahara. "Man shall not live by bread alone," and he shall not live by brains alone. The best part of a man's life is in his heart. I thank God that, to a large extent, cultivated men do live in their hearts, the scholastic age having passed, and a larger and better age having come in.

I see men going to colleges to preach, and preaching

sermons that are purely intellectual ; but, if I were to preach to College Faculty and students, do you think I would hunt up a subject which would require the discussion of abstract questions that were above the reach of ordinary human life, thinking that to be the kind of preaching that they wanted ? No ; I should say, " They have too much of that already." I should say, " The part of these men that lies in the brain is overfed ; and there is a great deal more of them down in the heart that is hungering and wishing that it could be fed." I would preach to that part which unites humanity ; which has regard for all men, high or low, rich or poor, home or foreign ; which binds mankind together, and makes the race one, the world around. That is a large ground, where men need more influence, and where they are more grateful for it, I think, than anywhere else.

In your preaching it is not enough that you should define God ; especially is it not enough that you should explain what are his relations to natural and what to moral law ; it is not enough that you should tell your hearers how it was that he constructed the universe, and how he said to himself, " I am going to create the world so and so." One would think, from the minuteness with which these things are described, that the old theologians must have been shorthand reporters, and must have sat and taken notes at the time of creation !

I remember that my venerable old father and Dr. Taylor used to sit for hours together discussing theology in our Litchfield parlor, when the question was, whether God *could* have had a government in which

there should or should not have been sin, and whether or not men could have been free agents. Father would say, "God would have done so and so in such an event"; and Dr. Taylor would say, "Stop, stop, Brother Beecher; God could not have done so; he would have been obliged to do so." Then father would go on and show what God could do and what he could not do, and why he could or could not do it, making a disclosure of the possibilities and the limitations of the Divine Mind which would quite astound Dr. Taylor; and so it went, back and forth, far into the night.

I do not undertake to say that there is not in that direction a range of proper inquisition and discussion; but this I say: beware of making that the substance of your preaching. Do not delude yourself by supposing that thus you are preaching God in any understandable sense to those who listen to you. When you discuss truths of the Divine government, follow the example of the Bible, especially in those parts where God himself instructs the race by his word, through inspired men, in regard to the nature of human society, the one central object being to rear up before men such a conception of the Divine as shall rain down on them a power which will lift men into millennial glory. Not only should we follow that example, but, in order to do it, we should resist that insensible drift which science has given to men's ideas, — science, which I honor and love, but which is not immaculate, and which is imperfect as an educator, — science, that is crude, that is not developed, and that is begetting a tendency among men to see in things nothing but natural, i. e. immediate, causes.

GOD IN NATURE.

To the old Hebrews, a phenomenon was divinity. If they made it literally a deity, without the knowledge of an interjected mediation or cause, there was a mistake on their part; but we are making the same mistake. When we look at an event, it means some law of nature; when we look at rain, it means a change of atmosphere; when we look at clouds, they mean a certain atmospheric condition; when we look at mountains, they mean geological formations; when we look at trees, they mean timber; when we look at birds, they are something good to shoot and eat. In other words, we vulgarize, or we secularize, almost all things in nature. "We must look at them as they are," men say. Look at them as they are! What does that mean? I affirm that it is quite possible for men to have a double line of influence proceeding from a phenomenon, one tracing it in its lower and secular connections, and the other associating it with the great First Cause, that stands back of all things, and fills all things with the fullness of his own self.

No man learns anything readily in sensuous forms who sees it as matter only, and not as the product of Divine thought, — who does not see it, so to speak, as a crystal from some side of which glances the portraiture of the Being that made it; and yet, in connection with natural objects, in connection with things that belong to the departments of manufacture and commerce, in connection with matter-of-fact things, the world is ceasing to talk of God any more.

When we see glaciers, what do we think of? Agassiz

and Tyndall. When we see mountains, what do we think of? This or that theory of geology. It is low; it is ill-bred; and we must go back to the habit of seeing more in nature, and of giving to nature uses in the realm of the imagination and of the affections. It is a habit which we once had, but which we have wellnigh lost.

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

I would not for all the comfort which I might get from the books of the Alexandrian Library, or from the Lenox Library, give up the comfort which I get out of nature. Nature, now that I have had the revelation of God which interprets it to me, I would not give up for anything. I had almost said that I would rather lose my Bible than to lose my world. There is no sunlight that does not say something to me of the Sun of Righteousness. There is no created thing that does not say something to me of God who framed it. I sit on the hillside, in summer, and watch the spiders as they spin their webs, and the grasshoppers, as they leap over me, freshman-like, jumping first, and looking to see where they have landed afterwards; and the birds, as they skip from branch to branch, or fly from tree to tree. There is not an animal that distrusts me. I sit so still that the birds forget that I am there, and sing as they do not often sing when persons are near them; and the ants creep about me and on me; and I have a sense of the relationship of these things. There is nothing that grows—no weed, no grass, no flower, no fruit—that is not in some way related to God in my thoughts; and I am never so near him as when I am in the presence of his works,—as when, night or day, I am

in that solemn cathedral, the world of nature, and behold its ever-changing beauty. There are no such frescos in art as God's hand paints in the heavens. There are no such relations of God as come to us through nature. In the budding, blossoming days of spring, in the balmy days of summer, in the fruitful days of autumn, in the days of winter, in every day of the year, there is something which is a separate leaf to me in God's outside Bible, now that I have learned to read it. I owe more to Ruskin than to any theologian. Eyes I had, but I did not see; now I see marvelous things. Ears had I, but I did not hear; now I hear things that are wonderful beyond all conception. New realms in the universe of God have been disclosed to me through these things. They have been a source of unspeakable comfort to me; and from them I have derived a power of comforting other people in my preaching. I owe much, very much, to the fact that I have become, as it were, Hebraized, — that I have gone back and practiced upon the genius of that noble old stock who learned by a wise spiritualizing of things visible to discern the invisible God.

FOLLOW THE HEBRAIC SPIRIT, — NOT FORM.

There is another criticism that I would make, or caution that I would give, — namely, that in attempting to comfort yourselves, and in attempting to teach others to comfort themselves, in the recognition of the Divine Being, you must not be content simply to go over the names that are contained in the Old or the New Testament, or names that have been subsequently developed and become familiar, as descriptive of God.

The power of many of them has perished. To us the conception which is given of God by representing him as a lion is very little. The early significance of this representation is gone. Still more strongly is that the case with those names which made the hearts of the men of old thrill; as, for instance, when God was spoken of as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. These names are to me the names of three very noble and respectable personages, but not much more. I am not drawn to them by any affinity of race-stock. The thread which ran down from them was spun so long that it broke before it reached me. They are names which, though they are still used, produce but little effect. They are not names that take hold upon the feelings of people in the present day as more modern ones would do. I have heard men pray, "O God of Abraham," "O God of Isaac," "O God of Jacob," "O God of Zion"; but I never heard men pray, "O God of Brooklyn," "O God of America." I never heard anybody, in prayer, imitate the spirit, and not merely the outward form, of the Hebrews in this respect. When the old ante-Christ Christians prayed to God, they prayed out of their necessity, — a necessity which led them to give to the Divine nature such titles as we find in the Bible.

What does a mother say, when her child is sick, and she is in despair, and when it flashes on her mind that her first-born, her only child, that she never dreamed could be taken from her, is dying? How can she say, "O Lord Jehovah"? It would be *brutum fulmen*. Why does she not say, "O God of my dying babe"? That would bring him very near, in power. Why do

you not pray in the name of your father, in the name of your mother, and in the name of your town? In other words, when you pray, why do you not imitate, not externally but internally, those men who, when they went to God, appealed to him in the name of those things which were truest and most significant to *them*?

There is a God of men who are bankrupt; there is a God of men who are in prison; there is a God of men who are sinful, and who have been found out, and who are overwhelmed with distress; and why do not they take their title from their circumstances and experience? What an opener of the Divine nature to men it would be, if they would transfer that which they need in their peculiar exigencies to the care of God, who is all in all!

HOW TO REALIZE THE DIVINE PRESENCE.

It is in the way of which I have been speaking that we can form some conception of the Divine personality, or disposition and character of God. We rise up to it through a kind of anthropomorphism. By that means we come to the best notion of deity as a Being possessed of dispositions, and not of attributes simply.

Now, how can we make this conception ever-present with us? I have already hinted at the manner in which it may be done; but let me elaborate a few points more clearly.

NOT BY WILL-POWER.

We fail to make a conception of the Divine presence the result of volition only, or chiefly. Herein

lies the great trouble with people. They say, "You tell me that I must love God. I try to love him, and I love to vacuity. Though I try to love, there is no God that presents himself to my mind."

Did anybody ever talk to persons who were seeking to love God, that he did not meet with this difficulty? Is it not the universal experience in revivals, with persons who have been educated catechetically to abstract notions of God, and who have never been educated associationally in respect to the Divine nature, that when they undertake to evoke Jehovah by their will, there is no response? Although you, who are highly cultured, have, on other grounds, a usable conception of the Divine nature, and can evoke it, the great mass of your people cannot, when you describe it to them as it is usually presented in systems of theology.

NOT BY FIXED ARTIFICIAL SYMBOLS.

We must refuse to have a variety of religious symbols set apart to be the sole interpreters of God. Of course, those who have High-Church ears to hear must not hear what I am going to say now. I do not object at all to a man's surrounding himself with symbols; I believe in symbols; I believe that they are the very life and power of education; but I do protest against a man's building a church and putting a cross on it in order to get an association of God. I protest against forms and ceremonies being introduced into religious services for the purpose of fixing the minds of men on God. I protest against bringing out ministers in black and white, with the view of impressing upon men by these colors certain moral qualities. I protest against

turnings and twistings as signifying spiritual ideas. I protest against those artificial symbolizations which have been invented to represent great interior principles and facts.

Suppose I should take a match and strike a light and go and hold it in a corner, and look at it; suppose a man, observing me, should ask, "Mr. Beecher, what are you doing?" and I should say, "I am bringing to my mind a vivid conception of the sun!" Suppose a man who had been taught according to the old Hebrew method, that the morning sun comes from God, — that the tremulous dewy atmosphere of the early hours is the breath of God, — that the wind, which shakes the trees, and sighs through their branches, is of God, — that the perfumes of plants and flowers are caused by God, — that all creatures that live in the sea, on the earth, and in the air, are God's creations, — that all processes of nature are carried on under the inspiration of God, — that whatever is spread abroad throughout the universe is God's handiwork, — suppose this man to have a deep, grand sense of the Divine origin of all things; and then let him think of these little pickaninny symbols, stuck away in the corner of a church, as representing moral and spiritual ideas! It is the poverty of them, it is the meanness of them, it is the narrowness of them, it is their tendency to fetichism, that I object to, and not to the principle of symbolism itself.

BUT BY SEEING GOD IN EVERYTHING.

Take this principle, and use it like men touched with the Divine spirit, reaching up toward the Divine,

and dwelling in the realm where you recognize that the "heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his hand-work." There is where you should go for your symbols. There is where things have their true significance. Prosperity and adversity, life and death, joy and sorrow, friendships and dislikes or repulsions,—all these things come with significant meanings to the minds of men when they rise to that upper sphere.

If in that way it is a principle of your life, each day, and all the time, to make *everything* a suggestion of the Divine, you cannot be far from God; you will not have to go a great distance to find him; you will be in his presence without seeing him; he will be with you at the table, by the couch, in your walks, everywhere. All things that you look upon will bring to you some memory of him. The very air will be redolent with his influence. There will be no question as to how you shall bring him to you. You will live with him; you will live in him; "for in him we live, and move, and have our being."

Perhaps I cannot better close than by going back and reading to you the Hebrew's thought about this:—

"Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou has beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning,

and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me ; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee ; but the night shineth as the day : the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."





V.

PRACTICAL USE OF THE DIVINE IDEAL.

February 26, 1874.

A PARADOX.

IN attempting to interpret to our people the knowledge of God, it is necessary, first, that the Divine nature should be unknowable, in order that it may be knowable; and then, that it should be known before it can be unknown, if you will excuse such a paradox as this.

IDOLATRY AND MYSTICISM.

The human mind longs for something which it can take hold of, and grasp by that part of itself which is most active, and in which its strength lies. This desire is the root of all idolatry. Idols are rude attempts of men to present to themselves a superior power by the use of those materials with which they are most familiar; and that root-desire is in itself right. Without it there would be no outreach toward God; without it the soul would not feel drawn or attracted heavenward. This is that which in the Scriptures is rebuked,—that men should attempt to frame a God for their senses, and out of themselves alone; and yet, since all knowledge on

our part, in its initial stages, must have relation to our own faculties, since we cannot understand anything that addresses itself to other faculties than those which we have, all our knowledge, in the beginning, must be of things visible, or of things easily cognizable; we must take known things. Being taken, however, they must be exalted, — they must be carried up so high that they cease to represent the weakness and the rudeness of the human element. This is the work of faith; or, in other words, the work of the imagination, acting philosophically with the higher intellectual and moral powers.

If you take the things which are known, and frame them into divinity just as you know them, and into such a divinity as shall stand on the level with your knowledge, you have an idol. If you take the conceptions which go to make the Divine nature, and employ abstractions of mere philosophical ideas, then you come into the realm of mysticism, or the realm of pure idealism, that is as barren of power as idolatry itself, — certainly as barren of any power for good.

THE KNOWN RAISED TO THE UNKNOWN.

So, then, the operation through which the human mind goes, in the construction of its conception of God, is that of taking things with which it is acquainted, and forming that conception by thought, by accumulation, by various means, until it is all irradiated by imagination, and under the Divine inspiration, — which I believe not to be local or special, but universal, in everything that lifts a man above the animal condition, and belonging to all time, as well as to all men who

think of moral ideas and the higher forms of intellectual truth.

Under this inspiration, — or, if I may so say, under the stimulus of the Sun of Righteousness, — these elements of knowledge with which we commence must be lifted up into that sphere where we can begin to assign to them infinity, — and to INFINITY there can be no absolute meaning other than that of illimitable and immeasurable extent or intensity. These qualities, whose germ-forms are in our knowledge, must be raised into a sphere in which the imagination conceives of them as literally presenting the utmost measures which human experience can apply in respect to quality and quantity, — and then recognizing their still vaster range.

So we take time-elements, and frame a conception of the Divine Being out of them. But then, before we have completed that conception it must have entered into the realm of eternity, and our God must transcend anything that the human mind can conceive of. In pre-existence and in continued existence he is exalted immeasurably above animal life, above human life, above race-life, passing all the analogies or facts with which we began. We lift up into the heaven that which, when once lifted up, is as much higher than the elements with which we set out, as the clouds that hang gorgeous in the sky, or are glorified at evening, are higher than the particles of vapor when they first begin to ascend from puddle, pool, or stream.

THE SENSE OF INFINITY, A MORAL POWER.

It is this thought that familiarly springs, and must spring, from your knowledge, but that must not stop

there, nor take its limits there,—that must be carried up into the infinite and the eternal,—it is this thought that will have much to do, by and by, in your work of the ministry; for you are to do for individual men from the pulpit, in the course of a few years, that which historically has been done for the race through periods of thousands of years. In other words, the great problem of the evolution of moral truth is to be enacted over again,—only it is to be done in briefer and still briefer periods. If you are a minister, you are appointed, in some sense, to be a Providence to your people, and to do in a short space of time what in earlier periods was done through the lives of nations and of the race. So, then, when we have begun with things known, we are to carry the idea of God as far away from known things as we can. In that way we get power; and otherwise there would be no power.

The infinity of God, in all its attributes,—the eternity of God,—the self-existence of God,—you may be able to carry your people back along the line of thought respecting these things until they pant for breath; there is a certain moral dynamic result, sometimes, by which men are so overcome in the contemplation of the eternity and self-existence of God, that they almost gasp at the thought of it. Yet it is not necessary that there should be a distinct intellectual perception of these things, in order to get the impression of them.

Thus it is also in regard to the universalness of God's presence, of his absolute supremacy, and of his omnipotent power; and in these later days, when we have a more perfect understanding of created things, the prob-

lem of Divine ease in the management of the universe is increased in difficulty of conception; and the thought that one Being can have personal care over that which we know and are all the time finding out to be the universe is rendered harder of conception.

Science is unpacking a particular part of the universe, and showing its infinite riches and variety and depth and complexity. All elements that go to make science so wonderful now are reacting in their turn, and are making that Divine Center, who is the Father and Controller of these elements, still more wonderful.

It seems to me that the idea of God has but dawned, and that we are to have further and further revelations respecting him. I believe, however, not that the new will slough off the old, or supersede the old, but simply that, as in a stately tree, branch after branch, or as in the pine, whorl after whorl, makes all that there was more noble and grander, so upon the basis of knowledge, actual and real, there is to be development after development, through ages, which will give a perception of God that prophets may now discern dimly, but that we do not see.

DANGER OF THE INFINITE IDEAL.

When you have presented this thought of God to your people; when to their imagination you have filled it full of power and wonderfulness; when you have made them feel that God is, in the heaven, and over the heaven, the Master of time and of eternity, the Indweller of the invisible, the Forth-putter of all phenomena; when you have raised before them an immense conception of the Divine power and grandeur

and majesty and fullness and glory,—there will be danger of their being without a God. He will be so large, and he will live in conditions so different from theirs, that they will be liable to lose him.

THE UNKNOWNABLE REDUCED TO THE KNOWABLE.

Now, therefore, you must bring back again from the unknowable to the knowable, those whose imaginations are tremulous with the impressions of the Divine which you have made upon them. You must lead them back from those depths to which you have carried them, by opening to them God's righteousness and his paternal government, and by making them sure of the truth of a Providence, particular and minute.

I would as soon die as live, if I thought the network of natural law which is being woven now was to take away my faith of prayer, and my faith of a Providence, personal and especial. With the destruction of the doctrine of such a Providence, and of the conception of prayer, everything, to me, would be destroyed. Deprive me of these things, and you deprive me of that on which my hope rests. Without them I should be as an atom floating in space, out of the reach of any sympathy.

You need to bring near to your people that God the conception of whom you have builded and magnified in their hearts, so that they shall feel that he is theirs. Point out to me a man whom all the world is talking about, who is surrounded by crowds of admirers, whose step in the nation makes it tremble, and who is influential and great,—point out to me such a man, and though I admire him too, I stand in awe of him, and

am afraid to approach him ; but tell me, "That man is your own father," and then the more there is of him the better it is for me, because he is mine.

You have taken poor, humble elements, and constructed a God, and carried him up into infinities and eternities and sovereignties and grandeurs, that are indispensable to the conception in the imagination of men ; but if you leave men shivering so far below that their sun has not beams long enough to reach them, they die, chilled and summerless.

God, after he has been thus exalted, is to be brought back to the comprehension of men in various ways, and particularly through that grandest of channels, Jesus Christ, as I shall show when I come to speak of him.

For, through him God has been brought near by a sense of his paternity in government ; by a sense of reality in providence ; by a feeling that men partake, through sympathy, of the capacity of the Divine nature to endure suffering, — not the suffering of the weak, not physical suffering, not the suffering that overtaxes the powers, but that suffering which belongs to love, and without which we can hardly conceive of a faithful friend or a truly noble being, — the very antithesis of the Greek conception, which attempted to make God as perfect as marble, until he was little more than a marble statue, having a very slight relation to life, and being without a throb of affection.

USE OF THE IMAGINATION.

It is, then, the known carried up into the unknown that develops the power over men of the Divine nature. First, it develops power of imagination. Theologians

are accustomed to speak of the imagination as though a taint rested upon it, because it has been so generally employed in connection with the merely beautiful. We think of it as an embellishment of art, or as that which has in it the key of art. It has to do with the beautiful that poetry largely deals in. It has to do with ornamentation of rhetoric or oratory. It has to do with grace of movement, with symmetry of form, and with harmony of color. But while the imagination certainly has these sensuous functions, it has also, and pre-eminently, a higher function. It works with the intellect; with the philosophical side of the mind; with those faculties which take in things that are not embodied to the senses; with the sense of reason; with that which some people say *intuates*, or thinks by inspiration, — whatever you choose to call it in your philosophy. It is that quality of the mind by which a man, through his reason, is enabled to take in the conception of things which do not present themselves to the senses. As the Apostle (or whoever wrote the epistle to the Hebrews; it was not Paul, I will vouch!) defines it, it is the “evidence of things not seen.” It is that conviction which springs up in the mind, of the reality of things which the senses cannot prove.

It is by the carrying up of the known into the realm of the unknowable that men’s imaginations are quickened, and by long dwelling in that realm that they may be sanctified.

It is of vital importance that this quality be awakened among your people. I do not believe that anybody can be a Christian who has not imagination enough to say and to feel, “Our Father who art in

heaven," — not in any house, not anywhere on earth, but in heaven. What other thing in men can climb the ladder clear up to heaven but imagination? How can a man stand and tell or ask all the world to rejoice at things not seen, through any other faculty than the imagination?

There is a form of religion that may be a hinderance; but there is another form that is quickening, that is vitalizing, that is indispensable; and there is nothing that develops it more than the presentation of a conception of the Divine Being made up of noble elements carried to such an exaltation that they transcend knowledge, so that the mind goes feeling, feeling, feeling after God.

As in those vastest palaces in Europe, such as the Louvre, one wanders from hall to hall and from room to room, until his feet are weary, and he is amazed and lost in the multitude of apartments, so, when one explores the nature of God, however familiar he may be with the elemental truths of it, he goes on and on, and apartment after apartment opens before him, until his mind is lost; but it is not lost in the sense of being staggered. It is a being lost which vitalizes. The sense is prodigious of the magnitude of such a Being.

THE HUMBLING OF SELF-ESTEEM.

When the imagination has taken hold of the view of the immensity, the power, the righteousness, and the glory of God, both physically and morally, it is through this faculty, and almost only through it, that the natural conceit which is found in very many men can be legitimately met and put down. "There is more hope of a

fool" than of "a man wise in his own conceit," we are told by the cynical king of old. I think the hardest thing to do, in this world, is to put down a man who has large self-esteem, and who is constitutionally proud.

The men of old, who shook the world, were made up in that way. The men who occupy important places, and stand as pivots on which great events move, must be made up of good stuff. They must have confidence in themselves, and they must be certain of their convictions. They must be men who are not easily broken or bent. And yet their conceit is to be taken out of them, and their pride needs to be humbled. But there is nothing that I know of which can ever bring such natures down, except a sense of God that shall make their own littleness overpowering to them.

A man with large self-esteem, looking at a great thinker or one capable of great feeling, may say, "That man knows more than I do"; but the distance or disproportion between them is not such as to overwhelm him. It is only by such a man's comparing his own power with omnipotence that he can be humbled. It is true that a man may be cudged into humility by misfortunes, or by abuse; but under such circumstances his power will be broken, and he will resemble flax that has been retted in the dew, and then broken in a brake, and then heckled, and then spun and woven. A man may be beaten by his contact with society so that he shall become listless; or so that, according to the familiar saying, he shall *have the starch taken out of him*. He may be humbled, but he has lost power in the operation. There is a sense, however, in which a

man may be thoroughly humbled, and yet maintain all the vitality, all the lunge, all the push, that there is in strong self-esteem.

When Job was assailed by his comforters, (Heaven help a man who has such comforters !) he battled against the whole of them, and did it bravely, and successfully, too ; but when God came into the controversy, and opened sphere after sphere of knowledge, and with wonderful kindness said, " Where wert thou when I thought, and where wert thou when I created ? " and made the heaven and the earth to pass before Job, then it was that Job said, " I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now my eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself."

It is only by a sense of God vitalized, radiant, burning, that the pride of character, which has in it so much power and usefulness, can be brought into that mood of humility which shall make it as sweet as it is strong.

Paul went through the same experience. He said, " I was alive without the law once [by 'law' here is meant the revelation of the will of God, and the measure of the Divine ideal, which is given to man] ; but when the law came, sin revived, and I died." He was death-struck at the view.

GROWTH OF AN UNDERSTANDING OF CHRIST.

I have said that this brings down conceit, and humbles a man. I go further : I say that this conception, beginning in known things, and going up into the realm of the unknown, and then coming back to the sphere of familiar knowledge, is an indispensable pre-

requisite to an intelligent and large conception of the Lord Jesus Christ, as God manifest in the flesh. For you must remember that it was not until the "fullness of the times" that Christ came. There was an order in the development of the world; and it is not said in so many words, but it is implied, and the facts show that it was not until the full development of the character of God, as it is made known in the Old Testament, that the distinctive qualities which Christ brought to light and evinced in his life could be fully appreciated. For example, every man, I think, before he can understand meekness and gentleness and sweetness and forgivingness in any person, must understand the magnitude and the power of that person. The events, the interpretations, and the applications in government of the Divine nature and attributes, in the Old Testament, have no parallel in the New Testament,—not even in the Apocalypse. That supreme work of the Divine nature which Christ came to interpret and to illustrate, and which must precede the believing of the Lord Jesus Christ, is delineated in the Old Testament Scriptures as it is delineated nowhere else. All the elements of spiritual truth which are revealed respecting God in the New Testament have their first germinant form in the Old Testament.

THE NEW TESTAMENT SEEN THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT.

I do not know where in the New Testament you can find any such dramatic and soul-shaking representations of God as were made to Moses; as were made to the Prophet on the side of the mountain where he had

fled ; as were made in the later prophecies, — for instance, those of Isaiah and Jeremiah ; and as were made in the Book of Job, — the mightiest drama ever written, and one which leaves all other dramas poor and pulseless in the comparison. I know not where else you can find any such description of the glory, the largeness, the infinity, and the eternity of the Divine nature as is contained in the Old Testament. You certainly cannot find it in the Gospels. You can find it only to a slight degree, if at all, in the Epistles. The Apocalypse is pictorial, opalescent, and wonderful ; but if you search you will find that most of its figures and its sublimest scenes are but reproductions from the Old Testament, — that they were found in the Old Jewish Scriptures in one form or another before they were put into the drapery of that wonderful later book.

Every man, therefore, should go to the New Testament through the Old Testament, either actually or virtually. If he reads and accepts the representations of the Divine nature and government as they are found in the Old Testament, then he goes to the New Testament as through an open door, or an illuminated passage-way. And to one who goes to the New Testament thus, there is great power in Christ.

Gentleness in Him that delivered the law upon Sinai is gentleness indeed. There is nothing so gentle as the touch of one who is dying of exhaustion ; but gentleness under such circumstances is weakness, and is as nothing. There is nothing more common than the self-renunciation of a man who cannot help himself. There is nothing in the world so empty as virtue when

a person does not care what he has done, and would just as lief have done one thing as another. Benevolence, where it is only absolute indifference to moral quality, is very easily understood, and is very cheap. But when God is represented, in the grandeur of his power, as One who is controlling the universe for the upbuilding of a future kingdom; as One who loves righteousness; as One who stands forever, saying, "I am patient with sin, I am long-suffering, I am full of kindness, and rather than that men should suffer, I suffer"; as One in whom leniency and meekness are attributes of thunderous power, of universal unobstructed government, of sovereignty and majesty, — then these elements have a meaning which they could not have, standing simply and only by themselves.

Thus Jesus Christ sprouts out of the Old Testament; Messiah is a blossom of the God of the old Hebrews; and you need to see the stem and the leaves, as well as the blossom. The salient familiar traits of Christ do not receive illustration, and have not power with men, unless they are shown upon a background of the unknowable, — that is, of God, in such transcendent condition, extent, and altitude, as passes knowledge.

You will find this same thing exemplified in the New Testament; as, for instance, where our Saviour, wishing to teach that lesson which is most fundamental, slowest to be learned, and most easily forgotten, knowing that he came from God, and went to God again, took a towel, and girded himself, and washed the disciples' feet. For Peter or John to put a towel around him, and wash the feet of his fellow-disciples, though it would have been something, to be sure, would have

been a very small matter; but for the Master to stand in the full glow and consciousness of his everlasting divinity, and do it, was a very significant thing. The humiliation, standing on the ground of Divine consciousness, was most powerful.

So you find in Philippians the statement that "Christ, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; *but* made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." You see, in this case, that the humiliation on the part of Christ was voluntary, and that it was over against a sense that he was very God. Another similar instance is that which is recorded in the opening of Hebrews, where it is said, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." Here, over against that consciousness of justice which existed in the Jewish nation, Christ is evermore depicted. And the subtle, unconscious influence of these antithetical passages lies in the philosophical ground which I have been attempting to illustrate.

REFLECTED LIGHT.

In view of the statement that everybody must virtually come to the New Testament through the Old, you may ask me, "Do you not believe that a Christianly bred child in these days when the Old Testament is less read and taught than it used to be, a child that has received instruction in the New Testament

alone, and has been taught what is right and what is wrong, what is virtuous and what is unvirtuous, is salvable, and may enter the kingdom of heaven?" Undoubtedly I do; because, although the child is imperfectly educated, the Old Testament is not left out. It is in the mother, and the child gets it.

Reflected light is a thousand times more than direct light. Direct light is the most brilliant; but yet, in every forest, under every rock, behind every house, everywhere, there are gradations of reflected light.

Not only does the truth of God exist positively and directly in this world, but it is reflected in a thousand ways. There are truths of God that come out of laws, out of institutions, out of manners and customs in Christianly bred communities; there is a truth of God that comes out of men's characters, that have been incarnated and embalmed; and you get a secondary light of truth where you do not get the first downfall of the light of truth. And so the child of Bible-trained parents may be educated to know God through Christ Jesus without having read a word of the Old Testament.

POWER OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Many parents do not dare to let their children go to the Old Testament. They say there are in it many things that shock the refinement of modern Christians, and that they do not want their children to see. There are, it is true, many things in the history of the race which are not agreeable; so there are many things in the growth of every child that are not agreeable; and we take him off to the nursery, and do not show him in the parlor; but they are necessary parts of life,

though they do not belong to polite society. And there are parts of the Old Testament which do not belong to polite literature; but they belong to life, notwithstanding. Life has knots and twists in it which must be taken account of in a true delineation. Old Cromwell wanted to be painted with the wart on his face; the Old Testament paints the warts on the faces of its heroes.

Now, if parents are fastidious about the Old Testament, the consequence is that their children are weakened, unless they get its reflected light,—and then they are not half so strong as they would otherwise be. I would rather take my child by the hand, and walk with him right straight through from Genesis to the last book of the Old Testament, and read every bit to him, unfolding and explaining it, than to have him deprived of the power which comes from familiarity with it,—all the time keeping before his mind the thread of moral principle which runs through it; for there is not more certainly a spinal cord that runs down to the lumbar vertebræ than there is a magnificent idea of God running right through the Old Testament from beginning to end,—of a God known, but unknowable; of a God righteous, and seeking to build up righteousness in his creatures; of a God administering reward and penalty; of a God inspiring love and fear. And having opened up the sweet encouragement and hope which are so abundantly to be found in the Old Testament, I would then open up the New Testament view of God's interior disposition, as made manifest through the Lord Jesus Christ.

I beseech of you, do not be ashamed of the Old Testament. If you are ashamed of it, God grant that you may suffer persecution; for I do not think a man ever suffered persecution, and fought bravely against it, that he did not take refuge in the Old Testament. It came out of storms, and it is helpful to men who are in the midst of storms. There is bone in it, — bone that has flesh and skin on it, and that is clothed with beauty. It is a wilderness; there are some rudenesses in it, to be sure, but these rudenesses were unavoidable, and they were not without some use.

The Old Testament is wonderful in many ways, — wonderful in its growths, wonderful in its visions, wonderful in its total effect; and it is indispensable as a background to the New Testament.

As mountains would be undesirable to live in, but as, nevertheless, they are fathers of all the streams that make the level plain sweet and beautiful, so the Old Testament, though it contains some things which are not attractive, is the source of those truths which run into the New Testament, and make it fertile.

SACREDNESS OF THE NAME OF GOD.

Now, in preaching, let me say first, do not fritter away power or reverence, by a tripping use of the Divine name. I am not reverential except through one or two faculties. Reverence in me is an auxiliary element. It is merely subordinate to others. I revere anything that is beautiful. I revere Christ more than I do Jehovah. This is my infirmity. Therefore I make a personal equation when I study the subject

of divinity, knowing that I shall be deficient on that side, and endeavor to make up the deficiency. But even *I* cannot endure the theological familiarity with the name of God which so largely prevails among ministers.

Mr. Arnold says that men talk of God as though he were a neighbor just around the corner, that everybody knew all about. It is shocking to me.

The Hebrews had a name which they never mentioned. This was true not only of them, but of many outlying nations. They had periphrastic words or terms which they used for expressing the unpronounceable name of God. As they drew near to it, undoubtedly it threw a sort of shadow upon them, and veneration was excited in their bosom by it.

Well, that is a trait of human nature. If you observe, you will see that the things which to you are the dearest, the noblest, the most precious, are the things which you are the least likely to speak of. Hence the most exquisite thoughts of love are those which are never uttered. You shrink from uttering them. It is not shame that prevents your speaking of them, but a reason of nature which God put in you, and they lie deep and unpronounced. There are many natures, fit to be angel-natures, that would die rather than speak of things in them that it is their glory to possess. And there is an application of this to the way in which God should be preached.

God is my heavenly Father. I used to take liberties with my earthly father, but I took liberties with him only so far, and in some things; and it was all the more sweet because there was a background in him

that I never took liberties with. This always, as it were, gave me a sense of the strength and the treasure that I had in him.

The very name of God ought to be sacred.

THE PREACHER'S CONCEPTION OF GOD TO BE PRACTICAL.

In the development of the Divine nature, do not always — do not ever, except in your study — stand at God's center and work out from that: stand at the soul's center; for it is not your calling to attempt to construct a Divine conception, except for its uses. The knowledge of the Divine nature which you gather is to be employed as the bread of life, as medicine for the soul; and, therefore, in the interpretation of the Divine nature, while you may make yourselves strong and wise by standing at the center of the Divine, and then logically balancing attribute and quality with facts of being; while as an exercise, and as a preparation, that may be allowable; and while, sometimes, in that part of your ministry where you are instructing your congregation on grounds that are to constitute the foundation of some view, you may delineate from the Divine center; yet, mainly, you are physicians, called to prescribe for the wants of men, to eradicate the bad and develop the good in them; and therefore your teaching in regard to the Divine nature must be largely relative to human necessity. This is an important element in preaching.

What is fundamental in theology is not necessarily essential to a practical conception of the Divine nature; for many things are indispensable in the construction of a system which are not at all indispensable in the

recovery of a soul. Predestination is the central point in the scheme of Calvinism ; knock that point out, and you cannot hold this system together ; but revivals will spring up, and men will be converted and become Christians, without ever having heard of that doctrine. It is necessary for a certain logical development of an idea or a philosophy, but it is not necessary as a curative process for the depraved heart.

You are to bear in mind that you cannot develop the whole of the Divine nature. You can form a generic conception of God, and you are to do it ; and then you are to take part after part of that generic idea, and adapt it to the wants of men.

That is the example of the Old Testament ; it is pre-eminently the example of the New Testament ; and, whether their theory be that or not, it is the example of men in their employment of the knowledge of God for the recovery of souls from sin to righteousness. Human want, man's need, therefore, must decide how the Divine nature should be preached.

SYMMETRICAL PREACHING.

This determines a question about which there has been a great deal of confusion of thought, namely, the question of proportion of truth, or, in other words, of symmetry of view. People sometimes say of a man who preaches under the inspiration of human life, "He is a good minister, but he preaches all on one side." There are theologians who preach under the inspiration of a system of truth, and not under the inspiration of human life ; who are all the time afraid that something will happen to batter that system in

on this side, or pull it out on that side; who, if they preach one view one Sunday, think, for no reason in creation than because they preached that view, that next Sunday they must preach the view which is its natural antithesis; and who thus go on preaching around the ribs of an imaginary system, to keep it from being lopsided.

Now, in the first place, you do not know enough to do it; nor do any others know enough to do it; and more's the pity if they think they do. The power of developing the Divine nature in its universal forms is not given to us; and nowhere else is this more positively declared (to the shame of arrogant thinkers and teachers) than in the Bible itself. You cannot yet tell all that there is in the Divine nature; and until you can, you cannot make a symmetrical, center-poised view of God. You can develop as much of the Divine nature as is adapted to man, or as much as is relative to his want; but even that part that is tangible, or comprehensible, or within the horizon of faith, is to be used in due proportions: not, however, on account of any imaginary dignity which there is in theology, nor because of any fear that you will pain God. I do not think God cares very much for your sermons anyhow; but he does care for men's souls. I suspect that he cares more for that end of the church than he does for this end,—though there is a difference of opinion on that subject.

When my ministry was in the West, what did I find? A loose and heterogeneous mass of men who had come from everywhere,—a detritus from the stream of emigration. As at the Delta of the Mississippi is gath-

ered refuse which floats down from the region above, so in the West were gathered human beings from almost every nation on the globe; and there the principle of individualism was the predominant one. I insisted upon the sanctity of the Sabbath day; I insisted upon the absolute necessity of churches, and of church forms; and I insisted upon the indispensable-ness of authority, and of obedience to that authority. I preached Sunday after Sunday against individualism, and in favor of association.

By and by I was transferred to the East; and there I found society hard-ribbed, vigorous. Men were lopped off on every side, to make them fit into crowded populations. Society was tyrannical. And ever since I came East I have fought society, and tried to get individual men to be free, independent, and large.

I was right both times. I did not care for abstract theories. My object was to get *men*. When, by reason of their condition, they needed one side of truth, I kept pouring that side of truth on them. Not that I neglected instructively to bring up other sides of truth; but I made predominant that side which they were most in need of. The instrument with which I molded them was adapted to the state which they were in. In the West I tried to bring men together in collective bodies for the sake of developing more power and better fruit; and in the East I tried to get men out of their Pharisaism, so that they might breathe freer, and, like trees that stand in the open field, grow broader, throwing out side-branches, and developing the glory of society.

Now, if I had to study the proportions of a philoso-

phy, I should probably study in such a way that I would save my philosophy, but lose my men.

Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, when you want to do anything with promiscuous, common people, you are obliged to exaggerate. If you take one needle and push it into a round ball of yarn you have no difficulty in making it go through; but if a man says, "It is not fair to take one needle alone, here is the whole paper, they must all have a chance," and puts them into the ball, and pushes them, together they are as blunt as the handle of a chisel. Fifty needles pushed in a bunch do not prick anybody. And if you say, "Now I am going to preach the doctrine of God's moral nature; but then, I am going to define it, and explain it, so as to take away all possible ground of objection," you will produce no impression. You will try to maintain your central truth or system, without any regard to the salvation of men.

You bear down on conscience in such a way that every man in your congregation understands what you mean, and is affected by your discourse; but an old instructed man says, "Well, yes, that was true; but then, it was exaggerated." Of course it was. What does a microscope do but exaggerate? What does any one of our tentative processes do but exaggerate? Exaggeration is often necessary where certain effects are to be produced.

In malarial districts they give men quinine; and if they were to act on the principle that there must be a symmetrical system supported, on the principle that medicine must be administered proportionally, having given a dose of quinine, they would have to give a cor-

responding dose of something else to balance it. Is that the way the medical practice is carried on? Who cries for symmetry in *medicine*? Symmetry in *health* is what we want.

VARIATIONS OF PREACHING.

One class of persons in your congregations will require one kind of treatment, and another class will require another kind of treatment; and they should be made to understand that, whatever system you employ, or whatever mode of presentation you employ, you employ it with reference to the welfare of the souls of men.

If, for instance, a company of poor, ignorant servant-girls, who are perceptive, who are sensuous in their nature, that is, live by things seen and felt; who act according to rules and regulations; who fulfill their duties by hours ticked off on the clock, doing first this thing, then that thing, and then that,—if such a company of servant-girls should come into your congregation, you must conform your teaching to the state which they are in; only, it must always aim at carrying them a stage higher. You must go down to them,—not to stay with them; not to encourage them to stay where they are; not to treat them as if they could not be carried higher; but to lift them up. You must minister to their want in such a way as to raise them from one elevation to another; and they will take in more truth and more truth, until they become well versed in those things which pertain to their interest as immortal beings.

If you go into a congregation of men who are educated in commerce, you must adapt your preaching to

their biases, and use terms with which they are familiar ; only, in adapting yourself to their biases you must see to it that you lead them into another and a larger sphere of thought and life. You cannot deal with humble folks (who are humble by nature), you cannot deal with limber-backed, willowy folks, as you can with old, tough, sturdy men. Why, there will be men in your congregations on whose minds storms of truth will fall like dews on an alligator's back, and what are you going to do with such men ?

There is a time for preaching damnation. There are moods and states in dealing with which the element of fear is indispensable.

I would not thank anybody to go with a prairie plow and six yoke of oxen into my garden or on to my farm, among my shrubs and trees, and roots and flowers ; and yet, if I had a fresh piece of prairie land, wire-bound and rooted a foot deep, nothing but that plow and those oxen would rip through it and turn it bottom-side up.

There are times and circumstances in which the fear element is indispensable, and people seem to think that because at such times and under such circumstances you ply the dormant senses, and strike through the thick hide with fear, therefore you must always do it.

Men say to a minister, " Ah ! I remember what soul-stirring sermons you preached when you were in the country ; and do not you remember how you brought in those old sinners ? but you have given up preaching such sermons now." Well, if a man was in the same place, and remained in the same state, he ought to be preached to in the same way ; but he ought to change,

and come to a higher plane of development, and need different preaching.

I hold that the nearer men live to matter, the more sensuous must be the representations which are made to them. In other words, they cannot understand anything which does not approximate to their nature. It is right to bear down upon men with the lower forms of revelation of the Divine government when it is necessary, but only when it is necessary. It is not right to carry the blazing torch of hell-fire all the way through your ministrations just out of respect to a doctrine.

The nobler elements of the human soul are those which, when they behold beauty, recognize it; and when they behold right, accept it. If you can bring men up to that state in which they are cultivated morally, and in which they can be made to accept the higher way from the noblest motives, that is the better and the truer course. If you cannot do that, fall back and see if you cannot take them on the next lower range. If you fail there, take them on the next lower if you can. Thus keep going down till you find where they can be reached. Your preaching should be such as to arouse men wherever they are. And its character must be determined by what you want to accomplish. Do not pour down rain and hail where smiles would be better. Do not use the double fist when the wave of welcome would be better. Act with intelligence in these respects.

HUMAN NEED, THE PREACHER'S GUIDE.

I find no more incompatibility in the ministries of men, between a belief in a great and terrible future, in

darkness, in desperate sorrows, in awful catastrophes, such as it makes the soul quiver to think of, — I find no more incompatibility or inconsistency between this belief and a belief in the love of Christ that breathed on Calvary, than I do between the declarations of Sinai and the declarations of Calvary. But this I think: that the ministry which develops any one side of the Divine character always and everywhere, whether it be the highest or the lowest side, relatively, without a consideration of its uses, is an imperfect ministry; and that, in delineating the Divine nature and the Divine government, when you come to administer that which you know, you must stand at the center of the human soul; you must be a man among men; you must weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice; you must know your people so as to be able to meet their want. Sometimes it will be tonic, and sometimes it will be diluent, that they need; sometimes it will be courage and hope, and sometimes it will be an influence which shall counteract presumption and overweening confidence. Go to the inexhaustible armory of God, and bring back and serve out to the people those armaments which shall make the weak strong, and the strong stronger, and by which even the babes shall be nourished into a true Christian manhood.





VI.

THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD THROUGH CHRIST.

February 27, 1874.

I HAVE, for the last three lectures, spoken on the subject of the Divine Nature ; and more particularly as it is developed in the Old Testament Scriptures, or by our reflection on its relations to nature and government. This afternoon I wish to speak of that manifestation of the Divine nature which is in Jesus Christ.

There was in the life of the Saviour as regular a development, both external and internal, as ever takes place in the life of any man. Coming into the world, and assuming the human condition, he passed through it from the beginning to the end. He "grew in stature." He "increased in wisdom." Not simply did he pass as by name into human conditions, but he partook of human life. When he entered upon the ministry he was a teacher of morals and of piety. He had in himself qualities which belonged aforetime to the old Hebrew teachers, and much that was in common with the best Rabbis of his time.

CHRIST'S PERSONALITY THE CENTER OF HIS INSTRUCTION.

But there was one distinguishing element which appeared early, which grew more and more emphatic, and which at last showed that it was the very center of all his instruction; and that was that he himself, in his own personal life and being, was the Truth, and that all other truth, higher or lower, had its validity in faith in him, on the part of those who heard him.

He was unlike any other teacher. No prophet had ever yet said, after instructing his people: "All this knowledge ripens and receives its true genius in you, when you fall in love with me." No Apostle, illuminated as they had been by Christ's teaching, ever dared to say, after the most eloquent expositions of truth: "I am the center of my own argument." And no teacher since, in the philosophic schools, or in the moral and religious schools, has ever presumed to approach such a thought as this. It is unique. It stands absolutely alone among the utterances of sane men. In fantasies and insanities there is sometimes such an exorbitant element of self-esteem, that men think themselves to be Divine; but that is a morbid phenomenon which no man, as an acknowledged leader among men, sane in body and sane in mind, ever introduced into his teaching. This personal element, this claim by a teacher that his teaching took hold of men for good by reason of their personal adherence to him, was never put forth previous to the time of Christ.

It would sound very strange to you if I were to say, "Now, such of you as love me will understand what I

have said"; and yet that was the teaching of the Saviour all through his life. "I am the Light"; "I am the Bread that came down from heaven"; "Believe in me," were his injunctions. His sovereignty was always calm and serene; and as the center of his teaching, above everything else, was this command: "Believe in me." He stood for everything. It was out of belief in him, or, better, out of personal relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, that were to grow all the phenomena he taught and preached, and which men needed.

If you find, on searching the New Testament, that this is the truth in Christ Jesus, it is very plain that whatever method you may employ in preaching Christ, God's anointed, that element must determine the collateral modes; and the direction and general tendency of your teaching must be to bring men into a personal recognition of Christ, and into an actual, positive soul-relation to him. You have preached superficially if you have given knowledge merely; you have preached thoroughly and truly only when you have given life in him. That is the test, or should be, of pastoral orthodoxy, — one's capacity, one's aptitude to bring the souls who are committed to his charge into personal love-relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This, then, is the beginning, the foundation, the substructure, of every true gospel ministry.

To preach Christ, however, is something more than laboring with the souls of men, though that will be a part of it. There must be presented a conception of Christ. There must be enkindled in men's minds an idea of personality; and in some way it must be brought near to them.

CHRIST TO BE PRESENTED HISTORICALLY.

Now, in doing this, we are to bring home to men the biography, the life, — the historical life, — of Christ. For, although the spiritual juncture of the Divine nature and the human is the end of your ministry, one of the educating ways of inculcating that is by a more perfect representation to your people of Christ as he existed on earth. And in this regard it seems to me that the geographical and the archæological elements, the chronological arrangement of events, the whole psychological delineation of the period in which Christ lived, may very fitly enter into the preacher's plan much more largely than in the olden times.

I think that men discuss disproportionately the doctrines of divinity, and the historical elements of Christ's life not enough. I speak from reminiscences of my own childhood. In modern days the study of the character of Christ is becoming far more general and searching than it used to be. Within the past fifty years there have been some hundred biographies written of the Lord Jesus Christ, showing the drift of men's minds on this subject; and no ministry can hereafter be a fruitful and instructive one, according to the wants of the times, that neglects this great field of investigation.

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF CHRONOLOGICAL ACCURACY.

There will be difficulties in this work. There are so many questions connected with the matter of incarnation, — of the Divine nature brought into human conditions; there are so many other points of controversy in the New Testament, particularly in the structure of

the Gospels ; there is so much in this undertaking that refines, or perplexes, or does both, that it is not an easy matter to investigate.

For example, whichever Gospel you take to make out the mere order of events, you convict the other Gospels of irregularity. There is no harmony between them, and no possibility of making them harmonize. Their discrepancies are the despair of all harmonists, if I may so call them.

Elicott uses some such illustration as this : if you take the order of events, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, in Luke, and then take those same events in Matthew, they will appear there as one, five, three, seven, four, two, eight, six, ten, nine, — and so of the other Evangelists. The order of time cannot be established through them.

These, however, are superficial matters. Their connection is lost. All the circumstances need not be similarly stated in respect to time. Conceive, for instance, of eight or ten, or, to make the numbers alike, four old men who were acquainted with New Haven fifty or a hundred years ago, and imagine their giving their remembrances of President Dwight. One story calls out another. One man relates some circumstance, and that reminds another man of some other reminiscence. They go on giving anecdote after anecdote, and discourse after discourse ; and the order in which they are given is the order of association, and not the order of time. Their statements are not chronologically arranged. Now, the four Gospels are a collection of memorabilia. The various incidents are put down, sometimes in the order of time, and sometimes not.

Sometimes they are gathered into groups by their apparent connection with each other.

So the want of a chronological arrangement of the facts renders your study of the life of Christ from the text somewhat difficult; but it does not take away from its profitableness. Nor would the mere possession of such an arrangement of itself make your preaching efficacious. You might make a complete biographical statement of the life of Christ in time, and in his relation to history and archæology at large; you might, in a course of lectures on the philosophy prevalent in Palestine at the time of his advent, describe the then state of the schools, and give the whole history of the conception of Christ, of his birth, of his childhood, of his development into manhood, and of his entrance into the ministry, following him, fact by fact, all through his life, and illustrating it at every step, and yet never preach Christ so that your people would come into near relations to him. You might delineate Christ and his career as you would Cæsar and his campaigns, making him a man and a marvel, without enkindling any feeling of personal relationship to him in the minds of men, without stirring up in them any enthusiasm respecting him, and without awaking in their souls any sense of spiritual want and supply.

So, then, while to preach Christ thus is a very important part of your work, it may be said, as a general thing, to be only a preliminary, preparatory part of it.

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S DIVINITY.

Next, it may be thought that Christ is preached to men when his divinity is set forth to them, and when

the claims of that divinity are urged among them. Let me not be understood as undervaluing the textual battle, when I say the text is the weakest of all the elements in the proof of the divinity of Christ; although there have been times when that form of proof predominated over almost every other. In my judgment, the preponderance of the evidence of the text is unquestionably very largely in favor of the divinity of Christ. But to me the mere textual affirmations of it — what may be called the exterior proofs which go to substantiate it — amount to comparatively very little, simply because the other forms of evidence by which it is proved are overwhelming, so that I do not need these. But I am considering it in its abstract relation to the wants of the congregations in which you will minister. There are very many persons to whom the whole inward meaning of the washing of the disciples' feet (which is one of the proofs, to my mind, of Christ's divinity) will amount to nothing; whereas the affirmation that, "being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal to God," would amount to a great deal. And the wants of such natures, even if they are not the deepest, if only they are not merely external or superficial, are to be met.

Hence, there is a fair field for textual argumentation on the subject of Christ's divinity. It goes but a little way; and yet that little way is important. If, however, one rests the whole of his teaching on that ground, he comes almost infinitely short of the task that is committed to him. For a Christ proved is not necessarily a Christ realized; a Christ in argument is not necessarily a Christ in one's moral consciousness.

THE TRINITY.

Then, there are other relations of the divinity of Christ: namely, its relations to government, to the Trinity, and to the Atonement.

I am a Trinitarian; not because I understand the Trinity, but simply because, all the Scriptures being taken into account, that solution of the Divine existence is more easy and natural of comprehension than any other. Nor do I find the slightest incongruity or the slightest inharmony of idea in the teaching of it. But the importance of that doctrine is another matter. In Boston, during the Socinian defection, there was an abnormal importance attached to it; certain great movements happened to hinge and turn on it; but it ought not to be supposed, because the relation of Christ to the Trinity was important then, or because it is important in the construction of a systematic scheme of theology now, that it is equally important in the conviction and conversion of men by faith in the Lord Jesus.

When men come to me with difficulties on the subject of the divinity of Christ, and of his coequality with the Father, — saying, “How is it possible that he should be God, with such limitations and such weaknesses and such circumscriptions? How can you conceive of Three in One?” — if I should reply philosophically, I should say that the analogy of nature led to a presumption of a Trinity; or that, at any rate, it took away all the presumptions against it.

If you will allow a moment's digression, looking at it in the light of modern discoveries we find that life, organized in its simplest possible forms, develops into

complexities ; and that these complexities themselves separate into groups ; until we come up to man, where we find a multiplication of faculties, families of faculties, in the human soul, — first those faculties which relate to the physical organization, then those faculties which relate to man in his social connections, and then those faculties which relate to the invisible Spirit and the moral world.

Now, the next step would be in the line, not merely of the multiplication of faculties, or of groups of faculties, but of the multiplication of personalities. And if we were to be carried one step further in the line of natural analogical development, it would not tax men severely on that side to believe in the tri-personality of the one God, — although, judged upon the plane of human experience, it is unintelligible. At all events, I can say that, to my mind, there is less proof against it than there is for it.

If it were asked, on the other hand, “ How can you conceive of such limitations and weaknesses as existed in the Lord Jesus Christ during his earthly life ? How can you conceive of him as divine in the relations which he then sustained ? ” my reply would be this : that no man is able to say how much is required for divinity ; for it is not quantitative alone, — it is qualitative as well. We estimate one’s nature by its attributes, and not simply by its magnitude. Who, then, can tell how much it takes to make divinity ? Who has weighed God ? Who has numbered his qualities ? Who has any such knowledge as to say that the development of mind-power and soul-power thus far constitutes one an angel, and that their development thus

far constitutes one a Deity? Who can tell where the finite touches the infinite? No man has the instruments by which he can make these measurements. All that men can do is to say that one is divine in quality, and by his relations to the human want and the human soul.

In regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, constructive theologians attempt to develop, in the theory of the Trinity, exactly what is his position, and what are the relations which he sustains to the Father and the Holy Ghost; but I have been accustomed to say to men, "Jesus Christ is one who stands over against every want in the human soul, and if he is such a one that you may love him with all your strength, if you may reverence him with all your power, if you may lean on him with the utmost confidence that belongs to the human soul, — you may trust in him for time and for eternity; and you could not do more toward God than that. And the upward yearning, the moral aspiration which you feel, is the evidence of Christ in you. You trust him as divine when you give to him all that you can give.

Whatever lies beyond that may be a fit sphere for discussion and for argumentation with philosophical men, and with theologians; yet, so far as concerns your work, which lies in the actual field of the ministry, it seems to me that this practical experience of the divinity of the Saviour will be more apt to bring men into vital relations of faith with him, than the mere philosophical and defined relationships of Christ to God.

I have, in my ministry, been surrounded by multitudes of persons who were reared in the Unitarian

faith, whom I have found to be persons of moral worth, of honesty, of conscientiousness; and I have pursued almost invariably the following course, in attempting to deal with them on this subject: I have attempted to awaken in their souls a strong moral *need*. I have attempted to ply the truth so as to awaken in them growth, yearning, aspiration. And then, when they were aroused, and their desire was strong, I have said to them, "There is a view of God in Christ Jesus which will adapt itself exactly to your want"; and I have presented Christ to them, as he stands related to the soul, as the best argument, and as the one which leads to the most logical conclusion to which they can come. And, one by one, under that mode of treatment, in which the controversial way is laid aside, and the case has been made, as it were, matter of medical practice, opening men's necessities to them, stimulating their desire, making their hunger more intense and more imperative, and then presenting the Lord Jesus Christ in relations of love,—they have accepted him without question, leaving until afterward the argument of moral *consciousness*, which is the transcendent argument, to which all others are subordinate.

When one can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," out of a consciousness of experience running through the range of his life, he has no need of further argument. He has an argument that is above every other. And to lead men on, step by step, without controversy, to develop their moral life, and to make Christ necessary food to them, is the way in which thousands and thousands of men may be brought to a sweet relationship of a faith in Christ.

THE ATONEMENT.

In the relation of the Saviour to the Atonement, I have had this experience : that thousands of men have been perplexed with what I may call its philosophical theory. I have been accustomed to teach men in regard to this matter, that first of all Christ was to be accepted as a living fact ; that, not denying the theory of possibility as to how he came to be the Saviour of the world, which is not without its importance, nevertheless, to know that Christ is the Saviour of the world, made so by Divine preparation, and brought hither to save men from their sins, is more important than to know just *how* it was adjusted through Divine processes and arrangements of government. For, when he presented himself, the command was not, "Believe in me on account of such and such logical arguments of fitness and propriety and governmental adjustments," but, "Believe in me on account of what I am." And he that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, accepting him, does not necessarily need to know how he came to be so and so. Must we not believe in God until we know how he came into existence and how self-existence is possible ? Must we not believe a fact until we know the whole history of that fact ? Must we not read a letter until we know how the paper was manufactured, how the ink was made, and all the circumstances under which it was indited ? It may be interesting to know these things ; but, after all, the news which the letter contains is the main thing.

If I am sick, and a prescription is made for me by one who is competent to make it, I do not take it

because I understand the theory of my sickness, nor because I know the ingredients of the mixture which the physician has prescribed for me, nor because I know what is in his mind: I take it by faith in him; and its action is the proof of its excellence.

Now, you can present Jesus Christ to men (I am speaking of those who are difficult to reach) so as neither to perplex them in regard to his relations to the Godhead, nor to entangle them in discussions of the theory and philosophy of the Divine atoning work.

If you present the mere fact that Christ died to save sinners, the heart will often say, as a refrain, "Of whom I am the chief!" If you say that Christ, by his own nature, by his declared love, by his offices as Redeemer of the world, will receive all souls that come to him, and purify them, and save them, that is enough for salvation. It may not be enough for you in making out your system of philosophy or of theology; but it is enough for your preaching,—and you must constantly bear in mind that in these lectures I am speaking of all these theological elements, not as to their structural value, but merely as to their functional use in the practical work of preaching. I apprehend that more men have been converted by the simple presentation of Christ as a Person than by the presentation of the Atonement as a doctrine. Without undervaluing the doctrine or philosophy of the Atonement as it is held by one school or by many, I say that if you preach the Lord Jesus Christ, revealed in the Word of God as One who came into the world to pity, to spare, to uphold, and to save men, you will be more apprehensible, and you will come nearer and more quickly

to men's consciousness, than if you go a long way around and undertake to explain the problems of the moral government of God as it is administered in the universe, and attempt to show how it is that God is able to do this, that, or the other thing, — how, for instance, he can be just and yet the justifier of those who believe.

It is the living, personal Christ, therefore, who ought to be the end and object of your ministry: not to the neglect of those other questions, but because the great mass of men are on a plane where they will be more susceptible to the fact than to any reasoning upon the fact.

THE NEW JERUSALEM BETTER THAN THE OLD.

As I have already intimated, in preaching Christ to men, while you bring up the historic Christ as the basis of all knowledge, it becomes absolutely necessary that you should not stand upon the Christ of eighteen hundred years ago. You must say, as Paul did, "It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again." If you could trace the thoughts of men, I think you would see that much obscurity and hinderance in the development of their spiritual life has arisen from the fact that they have attempted to go back to Jerusalem for their Christ. I know I did in many periods of my life. I tried to submit to Christ; and I imagined him as walking into and out of Jerusalem. In imagination I sat with him under the olive-tree, and looked up into his august face. In imagination I walked with him in Bethany. In imagination I stood by his side as he looked upon Jerusalem, and tried to come to a

sense of the infinite pity which he felt. Thus I went step by step with the Lord Jesus Christ in imagination. I was in bondage to the history of Christ; and it was not until I had broken loose from that bondage, and was enabled, by the Spirit of God quickening the understanding and the heart, to look up to a Christ living, that my yearning was satisfied. A Christ a thousand times more glorious than Jerusalem ever saw; a Christ a thousand times freer, and fuller of the manifestation of love, than any historical Christ; a Christ larger in every way than the Christ of the past; a Christ enwrapping every soul as the whole atmosphere of a continent broods over each particular flower; a Christ conceived of as living near, as overhanging, as thinking of each one, and as working for him,—such a Christ had power with me.

If you train your people to go back to old Jerusalem it will be a weary pilgrimage. There is benefit in that; but the New Jerusalem is better. The ocean of the air is easier traversed by the thought than the sea is by the body. Not the Christ of antiquity, but the “Christ that died,” and “is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us,”—that is the best Christ to represent to your people as manifesting God, and the one that will be most potential with them.

CHRIST, THE REVEALER OF GOD'S PERSONAL DISPOSITION.

Let me say, further, that when our Saviour came into the world a knowledge of God prevailed; but it was most largely a knowledge of God as a Power, as a Governor. The thought of one God, existing in great

power, in supreme wisdom, and in general goodness, had been established in the Jewish consciousness, if I may so say; but the private disposition of God had not kept pace with that thought in the minds of the Jews. They conceived of God as a Governor.

Now, you may know the governor perfectly, and not know the man. Governorship is artificial. *Governor* is an abstract term which, when you look into it, you find to mean simply a functionary, — one who *does*, *performs*, and not one who *is*. The Jews had come to a full conception of God as the Governor of the universe, — as the Lord Jehovah. It seems to me that Christ came into the world to make known to men God in his innermost and personal disposition; and that “the power of God and the wisdom of God” in Jesus Christ is that manifestation which needs to be made of the inner thought and private disposition of the Creator.

CHRIST, THE DELIVERER.

If you look further into the development of Christ in time, you will find that he was not so much one that revealed sin; for a consciousness of sinfulness had become developed in the Hebrews, in the old Jews; a moral sense had been formed in them, and it had prodigious power. The great fault was, that it expended itself on artificial observances, and not on things natural. The best-minded Jews in the time of the Saviour were a thousand times more conscientious than we are; but they frittered away their conscience. They spent it on ten thousand little conventional ceremonies. Right or wrong, with them, was compliance or

noncompliance with certain artificial arrangements. Every step of their life was ritualized and symbolized. They could not walk, they could not eat, they could not look up or down, they could not turn right or left, without coming in contact with something that conveyed to them an idea of right or wrong. Carried to the extent that it was among the Essenes, it almost separated men from life ; and they were tormented by it. They were under a bondage of conscience which was strong, multifarious, and minute, and which took away all real liberty, and all momentum of the moral nature.

Christ came not to reveal that men were sinful, but to release them from sinfulness. He was a Saviour and Deliverer. He reproached men that they were binding burdens on their fellow-men, making it harder and harder for them to use their functions naturally, and to live with spontaneity, and under the inspiration of great motives that, once in operation, took care of themselves, through Divine guidance. He came to untie what had been bound. He came to unravel what was knit. He came to set man on another plane. He came to teach men that not what they ate or drank, that not what went into the mouth, but that which went out, defiled them. He came to say to them, "You may eat consecrated bread or unconsecrated bread, so that your heart is right." He came to show them that right and wrong had reference to the internal state of men, to the qualities of their disposition ; and that it was the moral sentiments of the soul that determined rectitude and the opposite, and not any mere external acts. He went back of the artificial, and lib-

erated his countrymen from a bondage which was destroying their moral sense, and put them on larger ground, — the ground, namely, that right or wrong was to be determined by the interior faculties of every man. And he put himself into such a relation to these interior faculties, that a man who loves him with all his heart will have one guiding master-impulse for right, and that all the other dispositions will take their relative places in gradation under it, and will act according to its direction.

As when the great wheel in a factory turns every other wheel spins and buzzes, so he who, through the inner man, puts himself in the relations of love to the Lord Jesus Christ, will have that central and controlling element turning every other faculty right, or making its action right.

Christ did not come, then, so much to convict men of their sins, as to show them how they might be released from sinfulness through faith in him, and through loving obedience to him.

When, therefore, in preaching the Lord Jesus Christ to men, you find that they are in perplexity as to the exterior life, as to the outward and governmental relations of the Saviour, there is a way of escape from human consciousness of sin, and from human want of support and helpfulness to the Divine Deliverer.

CHRIST TO ACT THROUGH THE PREACHER'S PERSON- ALITY.

I have never, in all my ministry, had, in my own experience, any such realization of the Saviour, or any such tenderness of love toward him, as that which I

have enjoyed in attempting to release men from prejudice and bondage in the natural life. The clearest views of the Saviour that I have ever derived have been, not from argument and theory, which were dark, and which I could not understand, but from the living consciousness of men.

When, in times of religious inquiry, I have had men coming to me, I have studied their character; I have studied their wants; I have studied their surroundings; I have felt such an anxiety about them that I have gone again and again to see them; I have looked into their nature, and attempted to set the strong parts over against the weak parts, to help and succor them; and I have asked from day to day with growing interest about their condition, until at last there has been light dawning on their souls. And I have felt myself so strong and joyful in their release, that there has flashed out in my own mind the thought: "Why, that is Christ in you. You are brooding these men. You are thinking of them. You are looking into all their interior economy. You are making their life your own. You are pouring your own life into them. You are giving them the stimulus of hope. You are ministering to them the power of your courage. You are nursing and caring for them. And if you, being evil, know how to do such good things, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven do them!"

Then, with that experience, born out of such conduct, going back to the text of the New Testament, I saw it flaming where before it smouldered; and passages that had been dull as lead began to put on a radiancy which they have never lost. Stars may go down, but stars are

not quenched ; and texts may pass out of the horizon, but they come again, and never go back to their dark estate if they are illumined by such glorious passages of heart experience.

Well, following up that analogy, I have sought again and again to use it. Persons would come to me in the utmost anxiety of mind : " Mr. Beecher, I belong to a different parish, and you may think it strange that I do not go to my own minister ; but somehow, though he is an excellent man, I am not in sympathy with him ; I do not feel free in his presence ; but I have always felt that you had such sympathy with people that I could come and tell you all my difficulties." I let them go on, and kept them on that strain, till they poured out their whole heart in confession ; and then I turned on them, and said : " You have confidence in me ; you believe that I want to help you, and I do ; I give you my hand on it ; I would not spare myself ; I would help you at all hazards ; but what am I ? There stands right back of me the Lord Jesus Christ, and the feeling of sympathy which you see in me is but a spark which sprang out of that Orb ; why do you not go to the Saviour with the same living faith which you repose in me, and say, ' I come to thee for help ! ' " Thus, out of that personal feeling, I kindle in them a sense of Christ.

HUMAN EXPERIENCE TO INTERPRET THE NATURE OF CHRIST.

Carry it further. When persons come to me, and I instruct them, and find that they are careless and heedless, and have not followed my instructions, do I give

them up? I may rebuke them, and point out to them their folly. I may use stringent motives to excite them to a better way; but out of that comes to me a sense of the patience and the gentleness of Christ. I had almost said that now my living Christ has been formed out of the fragments of Christ-likeness that I have seen in men or in women, or that have been developed in me. I have taken these precious particles, as it were, and have framed them more or less into conceptions; and those conceptions have been exalted and glorified; and I have been surprised to find, on going back to the Bible with these conceptions, and reading it again, how full of meaning were parts of it which before did not mean anything to me.

The letter does kill or blind; and the spirit does give life; but, oh! how blessed the letter is when the soul is alive to read it! How blessed the Word of God is, in its experimental parts, when it takes light, not merely from the Holy Ghost, but from the Holy Ghost shining through the living, personal, human consciousness, bringing your deepest nature to the verification of it, and kindling in your mind a conception that there is such a thing as life much larger than anything that you dream of among men,—a life of love, and pity, and suffering for the sake of another.

And when I think how I have seen fathers suffer for their children (I know a father who has gone through a living death for twenty-five years, with drunken children, his substance wasted, his heart broken, his sorrows flowing like a river; and who suffers yet, and bears yet); when I see what mothers do for their children, what anguish they endure, and with what delight

they do loathsome things, how they begrudge to others the doing of the most revolting offices because they love their babes so much, how they hold themselves aloof from the pleasures of society because it is so sweet to them to serve nothingness with affection ; when I see the wonder of mother-love, devoting itself to the child that is helpless and useless, and that lives almost only in the prophecy of the mother's hope ; — when I see these manifestations, I take them up as precious things from heaven, as God incarnated in men who bear his likeness with them ; and out of such materials, thus gathered together, I frame such a sense of the real, ever-living Christ, that when I go to my people I go to them with as much certainty as ever John had, or as ever came to one of the disciples.

I *know* that my Redeemer liveth. I know that the conception which I have of the Lord Jesus Christ, filling all space and every realm, is not a cunningly devised fable, is not a fiction, is not a poem, but is a mighty power.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, THE CENTRAL SOURCE OF POWER.

This leads me to the last thing that I shall say this afternoon, which is this : I do not believe that any of you are ever going to preach Christ until you have Christ formed in you. It is this experimental knowledge of the Saviour wrought into your ministration, and brought to bear upon men in a living form, that is needed.

Is not that the theory of the Christian ministry ? Do you not stand for Christ, as Christ ? It is, indeed, a thing to make a man tremble. If men see that you

are proud ; that when you are reviled you revile again ; that you are haughty and domineering ; that you lord it over men ; that you are willing to have everybody honor and serve you ; that you are very good-natured and happy in your ministerial position when the elders all bow to you, and the deacons all look up to you, and your people all do just what you want them to ; that in all things you act in accordance with the great laws of human nature, — if men see these things, you may preach Christ till you are hoarse and you will not make them believe in him. To talk about his being divine, and to talk about the atonement, is all very well ; but it is only when Christ is in you, — in your meekness, in your long-suffering, in your gentleness, in your returning good for evil, in your praying for those who despitefully use you and persecute you ; it is only when Christ has been so formed that men see him in you, even though it be only as through a glass, darkly, but a living, pulsating life, so that they can take your example and lift it, by the power of imagination, into a higher sphere ; it is only when, seeing your good works, they glorify your Father which is in heaven, — it is only then that you preach Christ effectually.

If I were asked, “What is the greatest necessity of the Christian ministry to-day ?” I should say that it was the power which comes from Christ-likeness. And in studying Christ, while the text and the philosophy are important, the spirit is a thousand times more important. Your whole Christian ministry will derive its chief consequence and power from whatever of Christ is in you, and in you not by thought, but by disposition and life.


Young gentlemen, the world is passing fast. It seems but yesterday when I thought I was a young man: to-day I am an old man. It seems but yesterday when I thought I had endless time before me: my work is almost done. You are beginning, and life is all before you, with its taxations, with its annoyances, with its cares. The most important thing you have before you in life is not that you should have an eminent place, or a great name, or large revenues, or even success, in the ordinary sense of the term. The chiefest thing that lies before you, which you can conceive of, is that you should ripen into the disposition of the Lord Jesus Christ in such a way that when you come to men it shall be as if Christ came to them, bringing his power, his nature, his influence, his feeling, his life. You are all running to the Lord, and saying, "Lord, grant that I may sit on thy right hand or on thy left"; and Christ is saying to you, "My son, can you drink of the cup that I drink of? Can you be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized withal?" You want to be radiant ministers, eloquent ministers, ministers of great influence and success. Do you want to sit on the Lord's right hand or on his left? Then give him your heart, so that in humility, in gentleness, in unfailing sweetness, in patience under all circumstances, you shall be like him. In order to be successful and influential ministers, are you willing to bear about with you the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that his love may be made manifest in your heart? This it is to preach Christ, as the wisdom of God and the power of God unto the salvation of men.



VII.

VIEWS OF THE DIVINE LIFE IN HUMAN CONDITIONS.

March 4, 1874.

 OUNG gentlemen, I do not know as I shall succeed at all, this afternoon, in what I wish to do. If I do not, it will not be the first time that a good subject has been spoiled in the handling, in my ministry. Now, every effort that you make to do something that requires tact and skill and the various subtle combinations of mind which are called forth in preaching, if it throws you back in discouragement, and causes you to feel that it is of no use, it will harm you ; but it should not, for no man ever undertook a subject honestly and faithfully, and failed in it, that he was not better prepared to succeed the next time. Some of the best sermons that you will ever preach, probably, will be those which are made from abortive attempts, broken up and remodeled afterwards.

I wish to speak, this afternoon, of the aspects of a divine life in human conditions.

Say to any one class of men, — poets, philosophers, or religionists, — “Draw out, if you please, your con-

ception of the way in which a perfect Being, a Deity, would conduct himself if he were thrown down into time, and amidst the temptations of physical law and the conditions of human life. Give this ideal picture." I suspect that in no single instance would men unenlightened by the actual facts of the New Testament come within speaking distance of the reality; and yet, considered as an abstract proposition, this conception is profoundly interesting to a student, it is still more interesting to a preacher, and it is indispensable to those who would practically avail themselves of the mission of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

THE DIVINE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS IN JESUS.

Now, in the beginning, you must notice that Jesus, as he came to this world,—born of a woman, being successively a babe, a young man, a working man, a toiler among the poor citizens, himself a citizen, subject to all the experiences that belong to what may be called his strictly secular and early life,—from our first knowledge of him as a thinker or an actor manifested the divine consciousness. That is to say, it was very plain that he himself stood in the conditions of this life as one who remembered a former existence,—as one who knew himself to be higher than kings and greater than lords; yea, that, without the slightest apology, or any sense of incongruity, he did not hesitate to take a higher place than the prophets, than the law, than the altar, than the temple, than the whole Jewish economy; and not only this, but that, though in time-relations he spoke of himself as subordinate to the Father, yet in eternal relations he spoke of himself

as equal with the Father, and as his companion. He never, in a single instance, showed a consciousness of limitation, or of imperfection, or of infirmity, or of sin ; he never uttered a conviction which indicated that he recognized anything less than absolute holiness in himself ; he always carried himself with an easy and gentle grace, in the consciousness of his perfection, which we had almost said came from life-long breeding, but which was innate, inborn, with him.

He teaches us to say, "Our Father"; but he never said so: he always said, "*My* Father." We are all born of men ; and yet he seeks out the phrase, "Son of Man," as something significant when applied to himself. That phrase is not a distinctive title for you or for me, because we are all sons of men. There was therefore an innate consciousness, an inherent sense in his soul, that "Son of Man" was a strange title to call him by, inasmuch as he was God's own equal ; and the phrase has, under such circumstances, great power.

HIS SOCIAL, NATIONAL, AND PROFESSIONAL POSITION.

We are prepared, then, starting from this consciousness of the Saviour, to ask how he carried himself. In the first place you must recollect that he was not an ordained minister at all. He was a man of the people ; he sprang from among them ; and that was not strange, as the Jews were democratic in their spirit and institutions. Having sprung from among the people, he never left their ranks. He never went through the appointed education. He had only the education which belonged to the peasantry among the Jews. There is, at any rate, no evidence that he had any other, however

much presumption there may be as to the probability. He never joined himself to any of the great sects or divisions within the one Jewish church, and he was never sent forth by authority. He appeared just as the prophets did. For the Jewish system was remarkable in this: that while the regulation worship was to the last degree precise and imperative, any men and any women, in the whole history of the Jewish people, who had primal inspiration, were at liberty to sing, to speak, to teach, or to prophesy. The Jews had the utmost respect, therefore, for native genius and power. Among the Jews, they who undertook to administer stated affairs must do it in stated ways; but those whom God called outside of these ways had liberty to exercise their functions according to their inspiration. So Christ never went out of his position, as one born among the people and a private citizen. He spoke only because he had whereof to speak, and somewhat to say.

All his life long, then, he appeared not as a professional man. He was not in any proper sense of the term a priest. He represented nothing, he did not stand for anybody, among his people. He stood a Voice, a Light, a living Soul. His was not a personality of solitariness, but a personality separated from official classes in order that he might always belong to his kind. He was not ordained out from among the common people, but he abided in their midst, as it were touching them, and being near, therefore, to their personal sympathies.

Then, he was a man of his own age, and of his own country. Although he was divine, and therefore was

absolute and universal in his knowledge of the truth, in the higher range of his consciousness, nevertheless, not only did he come from among the common people, but he came from the Hebrews; he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and he was true to his lineage. He was faithful in all respects to the best things which belonged to the Jewish national life.

There is great significance, too, in this, if you bear in mind that it was the divine consciousness striving to keep close to man's consciousness; that it was the divine heart held near to the common heart, that men might receive light and warmth and inspiration from God.

To a large extent this was one secret — not the only one, but one — why the great Jewish common people felt as they did in regard to Christ. They were proud of him as the ideal, typical Jew. He represented to them the best things. He observed the Jewish Sabbath. To him the synagogue was not forbidden ground. He worshiped there. He conformed himself to its customs. He visited the temple. During his active ministry he was probably as regular in his attendance at Jerusalem as any man in all Galilee.

So he observed the laws and customs of his country, and identified himself with the people. He came in such a way that they felt, "This man is the representative of all of us"; and when they saw that he had miraculous power, they began to say, "This is the Messiah; he is a Jew of great nature, great power, and great glory; and he is to set us free." And it was with disgust and reaction that they looked upon him afterward, when he would not use that power to make

himself, and would not allow himself to be made, king. It was this fact that caused defection from him, and drove him out of Galilee, to the foot of the mountains, where he was transfigured. It was the high-tide of his popularity; but it ebbed among the common people when they found that this Jew would not lead the Jews to victory.

One fact, however, is to be borne in mind all the time, namely, that the conscious divinity which was in Christ allied itself to nationality, to manners and customs, to usages, to laws, to services, to everything that should identify him with his people.

HIS UNIVERSAL SYMPATHY.

Then, again, we are to bear in mind that he manifested a universal sympathy with men. I am not speaking, now, of that kind of universal sympathy which would remind you of a cloud that moves over a whole continent, and therefore is universal, raining alike on everything. What I mean, distinctly, is this: that I am struck, in following the Saviour in his walk through the land, to see how he treated alike every class, whether civic, professional, or moral, — that is, how he treated them with sympathy. The poor he treated with rare tenderness; but with not a whit more tenderness than he did the rich Pharisees, who were able to throw open their houses and invite him to dinner. He had a heart for rich men just as much as for poor men. He walked with them when it was natural that he should. He had no prejudice against persons because they were in office. He was not opposed to rulers, to Pharisees and Sadducees, as such. If he met them, and they

were right-minded men, the fact of their official position did not repel him from them.

In the earlier stages of his ministry the men who were high in station looked him over to make use of him. They hoped that he would be the foremost Pharisee, that he would exert his power in their behalf, and that he would serve their party; and they became antagonistic to him only when they despaired of making him partial, and of shutting him up within the bounds of a party movement. To the Roman centurion he was kind, though the class were foreigners, and hated by the Jewish people. He showed himself benign and considerate and tender to the Syro-Phœnician woman, although he at first tantalized her, as a means of developing that which was in her, — for it seems to me that her case was like that where the diver brings up an oyster from the depths below. Rude and rough, it is most unseemly; but he knocks it and beats it with his knife, and finally inserts the blade, and cuts the ligament; and behold, there is the pearl, which never would have been seen if the oyster had not been opened in that way. So Christ opened men by drawing out what was in them, to reveal the exquisite jewels that were hidden there. You never would know what a geode is if you did not crack it with a hammer. When you crack it, you find it to be filled with crystals. I wonder what the geode thinks about it!

Now, Christ went among the rich and the poor alike. And he had compassion for all classes. His nature was one of universal sympathy, such that men felt that he liked them. Wherever he went he produced that impression.

Did you ever go by a rose-bush, in the morning, when the dew was on it, and it was saying its prayers? And when its odor and fragrance came out upon you so fresh and so grateful that it stopped you in your course, or on your errand, and you took three or four additional quaffs, did you ever do it without feeling, "This rose-bush likes me"? Did it not bring to you a certain sense of the gift-power on the part of the rose-bush, as if it were conscious?

Wherever Christ went he exhaled something. There was that in him which, whether he went among the high or low, rich or poor, bond or free, good or bad, publicans and harlots or Essenes and Sadducees and Pharisees, drew men to him. He made life sweeter to them. He made them feel that there was something precious near them. He woke them up and stimulated them.

If this was merely a great moral consciousness in the world, it was one thing; but if it was the Divine Being carrying himself in human conditions, it is another and very different thing, of which I shall speak.

HIS SUSCEPTIBILITY TO PERSONAL AFFECTION.

Bear in mind, again, the great susceptibility which was developed, in the earthly life of our Lord, to the sentiment of love. I discriminate between benevolence and love, the former having reference to being, in general; to the universal capacity of experiencing pleasure and happiness; to a common susceptibility to beauty and desirableness: the latter having a special and individual element.

Now, while Christ was compassionate and benevo-

lent, he had also to a remarkable degree the faculty of personal love, and of exciting in turn the most enthusiastic affection. This, too, is to be interpreted from the same standpoint, namely, that he walked in the consciousness of his own divinity among men. And yet, when the young man came to him, and said, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" he saw that there was that which was rare and excellent in the young man, and he "looked upon him and loved him."

Not simply was he subject to those gradual yearnings of the heart which cautious men have who watch over against a heart for six years, and then try it, and at last come into a kind of smoldering affection for it,—not at all. With him, it was to look and love. He saw, and his soul went out with a gush. It is the inspirational and spontaneous carriage of his affections that strikes me.

I take notice that there were but three of the disciples that he specially loved. He loved them all; but there were three that he loved better than the others,—Peter, James, and John. You will hardly ever see the names of the others mentioned except in an inventory of the disciples. These three were generally with him. They went with him into the mountain, and into the chamber at Jerusalem; and afterwards they were the principal men who figured in connection with him. Doubtless the others were useful in their way: but these were evidently the men whom he loved. Probably he loved them because they deserved to be loved.

You will take notice of another fact,—that when he made the acquaintance of the family at Bethany (the time at which this occurred we do not know; for we

have only fragments of the history of the life of Christ; there is no continuity in it; certainly there is nothing like amplitude in the accounts which we have concerning him. John, you know, said, "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" — which I do not take to be literal, exactly, but which is an Oriental exaggeration that gives you some conception of the multiplicity of events connected with his life that have not been recorded), — you will take notice that when he made the acquaintance of Lazarus and Mary and Martha, it is declared that he loved them; and the kind of familiarity with which Martha complained to him about Mary, saying, "Do not you care that she sits, lazy, at your feet, while I have to go round the house and do the work?" — that kind of familiarity does not spring out of a casual acquaintanceship. It comes from long intimacy and great confidence.

So, it is plain that the nature of Christ was one that exercised and begot direct personal love. And Christ was God. There is great power in this thought to me. The things that he did, he did not do because he was a man. Being God, and walking as a man among men, he did these things; and they show how the divine nature acted through him.

I will challenge all human literature to produce the equal of the last discourses of our Master, as they are given by John. He delivered them while standing under the very cope of death, when he felt the full premonition that his time had come, when he knew

what was before him. In the midst of the whole round and orb of unexampled and mysterious suffering he said to his beloved, that, having loved them, he would love them unto the end.

Now read that discourse of love. How deep it is! How high it is! How strange it would be, if we had not been so familiar with it that we walk over it like a dusty road, and tread it under our feet! It is wonderful beyond all comprehension that in such an hour that Heart of conscious Divinity should have burned so toward these poor, ignorant, fearful, ambitious, prejudiced disciples, and poured over them a declaration, time and time again, that might make an angel tremble with joy. And to say to me that it was a man who did it would make him a wonderful man,—but it would spoil all my Bible. To tell me, on the other hand, that that was the carriage of God's heart, would bring God very near to me, and open to me the future in a way that nothing else could.

ATTRACTIVENESS OF CHRIST'S BEARING.

More than this, I call you to take notice of that variety, that play of every part and side of the Divine nature in Christ, which made him the most attractive and fascinating man of his time. I think that the attempts to make perfect men are about the dreariest things that take place in fiction and biography. I never saw one of that class who are called "perfect men" that I would not go five miles across lots to get out of his way.

When we undertake to make perfect moral men according to the prevailing idea, they are so dry, so pre-

cise, so rigid, so afraid of evil, and so distrustful of themselves, that we take pretty much all the color out of their cheek, and pretty much all the throb out of their heart, and pretty much all the vim out of their hand, and pretty much all the wildness and freedom out of their foot, and leave them with scarcely any of those elements which make them agreeable companions in life. And it is often said, "That man is spoiled by religion. He has joined the church, and he is not anything like the good fellow that he was before. He used to have a free and large nature; but now he has a mask on his face, and a corselet on his breast, and greaves on his legs." People are consoled by the hope that the disclosure of his good qualities will take place, as I also hope it will, in the life that is to come.

Now, it is an utter pity for goodness to be made poor, lean, and mean. It is a pity that selfishness, that pride, that the intellect, that that which is of this world, should be made more radiant and glorious than those higher qualities which belong to the Christian character. It is a pity that men should look upon secular heroes, and say, as they are often obliged to say, "Well, if he *is* a worldly man, he is a royal fellow. He is wrong, he is loose in his habits, there are many things about him which cannot be justified; but he is a first-rate specimen of a man, after all." And it is a pity.

It is a pity that of men created of God, and regenerated by Divine grace, it should be said, "They are good men, to be sure, but they are so uninteresting! Yes, they are good men, but they are a little dry. Yes, they are good men, they are conscientious, but their

conscience is like a harness every buckle of which girds at each step. O yes, they are good men! Society has to have all sorts of men, and good men fill up." I always feel humiliated and ashamed when I hear such talk. Divine wisdom, divine purity, divine disinterestedness, divine integrity, divine justice, yea, divine penalty, all of them are heroic; and if we could but see them as they are seen above, they would seem beautiful to us. There is nothing on earth so beautiful as wisdom, the beginning of all beauty; there is nothing so free; there is nothing so large; there is nothing so attractive; there is nothing so desirable.

Holding this view, when I come to read of the earth-walking of my God, — my Jesus-God, — I find that he had just that liberty and just that spring which comes from the supremacy of the higher elements of the soul. He did not go around all the while with his resolutions in his hands, and with a sort of half-consciousness that he was under a necessity of being good. It does me good to see that he was grieved. It gratifies me to know that he was angry sometimes; I would not have had it otherwise for the world. A nature that cannot be made angry in this world must be a stagnant pool with waters so thick that the winds cannot stir them. I am pleased that he was subject to moods that came and went; that his mind experienced changes; that he had elevations and depressions of feeling, — in other words, that the imagination, the reasoning, the affections and the moral sentiments, and all the appetites and passions in him, stood serving his predominant feeling of love in such ways that they adjusted themselves to the infinite varieties of life.

Christ was not a stiff, stark censor, walking among men in such a way that children ran away from him. He never would have made you think of the ideal deacon, — never!

Take a dramatic scene. It is the only one that is recorded; but there were many others, — I will vouch for it.

On one occasion, when he was talking to the grown folks, such was the influence which he produced on the people in the crowd, that mothers, with babes in their arms, as they stood listening to this man's preaching, had an impulse. What was that impulse? What is the impulse that people often feel when they hear a minister preach in a church? Anything but a sense of personal adhesion. Anything but a desire to run to him. But when Christ was discoursing, right and left, through the crowd, these mothers, who loved their children and who had their world in their arms, had this impulse: "O, my boy would be a better man all his life if He would just touch him!" And one said it to another. And they pressed themselves up to this man. Such a man he seemed to them, that they said, "If he will but lay his hand on my child, it will be a priceless boon." But the disciples had the old Jewish notion of propriety, and said to these mothers, "Go away; he is talking to grown folks, not to children."

Well, now, there is another feature connected with that which ought not to be lost sight of, namely, that the children did not cry and run away from Christ, but nestled right up to him. This was remarkable; for, as you very well know, children are shy of strangers, and not once in ten thousand times could you take a child

into a great noisy, boisterous crowd, and not have it frightened and restless. You know that almost never will a child sit perfectly still during a discourse. But in this case they seem to have been quiet and contented; and we have it recorded that Christ took them up in his arms, and laid his hands upon them and blessed them. There were those little cuddling children sitting still while he was talking; and when they were brought to him he lifted them up, and put his arms around them, and laid his hand on their heads; and I do not doubt that he kissed them every one.

This reveals two things, — the effect that he produced on men, and his own feelings toward them. He was divine. That was divinity. That is the way the heart of God acts. It was let down among you, and right into your conditions, in order that it might act so that you could stand and see it; and so that when, afterwards, you lifted it up into the infinite sphere, you should lift up the right thing, and lift it up in right directions.

JESUS NOT A FAULT-FINDER.

I might spend the whole afternoon in detailing instances of this kind: but there is one more point that I wish to speak of, namely, that this man, who was filled with divine consciousness; that this man, who had the very soul of purity and sinlessness; that this man, who came to reveal, as far as the world was prepared to receive them, the secrets of the future spiritual and eternal realm; that this man, who was the ruler of integrity; that this man, who carried in himself the intensest sense of right, — that he rebuked and

criticised, and yet never was querulous, and never was fault-finding. This is one of the surprising things. I have gone through the four Gospels oftener than I have gone through my garden, looking and hunting, from the beginning to the end of them (and, young gentlemen, this is not a very hard way to read the New Testament),—I have gone right straight through the Gospels time and again, to see what was the mood of Christ's mind, and to see what was the manner in which he laid that mind, with rectitude and truth in it, on the erring, wavering, crude, nascent minds of the men who were about him; and I have come back profoundly impressed with this feeling: that he was not a fault-finder, and that he did not go into neighborhoods and families, saying, "This is wrong; you ought to correct that," and so on. He did not do what you see many conscientious parents do, who are forever saying to their children, "Take care, my dear; don't do that; keep away from there; you mustn't do so," thus always holding them in check, and giving them forever a sense of their imperfection. He was not like the mother whose little girl, when asked by her Sunday-school teacher what her name was, said it was "Emma Don't." The child had had "don't" said to her so much that she supposed it was a part of her name!

In reading the life of Christ we derive from it, what? A sense of the loftiness of his spirit. In following him through his career among men on earth, what find we? Not querulousness, not complaining; but kindness and love toward those who were out of the way. The people, in his presence, felt that they were guilty; but it

was his nature, when walking among imperfect and sinful men, to so carry himself toward them that they should feel the cordial of the Divine heart, and be lifted up by it. This I take to be very significant.

THE PREACHER MUST MAKE CHRIST DESIRABLE.

Now, then, my first remark, in view of these facts, or glances toward lines of fact, is this: that whoever preaches Christ among men, and fails to make him the Chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, does not preach Christ as Christ preached himself. It does not make any difference where you put him in the moral government of God; it does not make any difference how much you build texts up about him; it does not make any difference how you analyze him; it does not make any difference how you incorporate him into a philosophical system; whatever else you do, your great aim must be to make him appear as attractive and beautiful in your representations as he was in his own life. That is the test. And it is not enough that it should be so once in a while: such is to be the average presentation. For he is the Hope of the world; and the world is not made up of perfect men and perfect women. The world does not begin at the upper sphere. The whole race is born low; every generation commences at the bottom; and what the world needs is something that shall help them, that shall encourage them, that shall lift them up. That is what Christ gave, in his mission upon earth; and he fails rightly to apprehend the character of Christ, and rightly to present him to men, who does not make him beautiful, winning, desired, and most desirable.

CHRIST'S LOVE TO SINNERS.

The next point that I would make is, that our Master produced the impression of exceeding loveliness and sympathy and yearning, but that he — I hardly know what term to use ; *condescension* is not the right word, because it brings in the idea of aristocracy — he did not sit to receive men ; he bore himself in on them. He did not allow himself to be a part of the race in a generic and philosophical sense alone : he went out to men. He sought them.

It is one thing for a man to sit in state and receive calls from citizens, and greet them pleasantly as they come one after another, and be gracious to them, and express a desire to be better acquainted with them, and listen courteously to what they have to say, — it is one thing to do this ; and it is a very different thing for a man to go about and visit those citizens in their various spheres of life.

Now, the impression derived from reading the life of the Saviour is this : that he took himself to men ; in other words, that he came down and joined himself to their want and to their weakness. The point of union between conscious divinity and the lowest imperfection is, that it is the nature of the Divine to unite itself to weakness in order to medicate it, and inspire it with strength to raise itself up.

Ah, if I had known this in early life, what years of struggle, and at times of anguish, I might have been saved ! But I thought of Christ as standing beyond and above my reach ; and I supposed that I could have the comfort and the blessedness of his fellowship only

when I had complied with certain conditions ; and I spent years and years in trying to comply with those conditions, in order that I might come into intimate relations with him. But if I had known that it was his nature to come right to me, and that already he was mine, and mine not because I had been awakened, and had repented, and had entered upon a certain course, but because I was poor, and needed him, that would have sustained me. To be Divine is to take care of the poor and needy and sinful : and if I had known that Christ was mine because I was poor and needy and sinful ; if I had known that it was the Divine nature to love, and to love those who were degraded and unfortunate and in trouble ; if I had known that I had my Christ to begin with, what an encouragement it would have been to me ! If I had known that it was the essential nature of God to succor the oppressed, to make himself a ransom for those who were in bondage, to bring them out of that bondage, and to break up the habits and destroy the evil forces which were in them and about them, by a celestial inspiration of his own heart which should enable them to become the sons of God, I should have been spared much solicitude and pain. The thought that he lets himself down, and takes hold of the human race *as they are*, is most encouraging. It is divinity to do that. In all the elements of the universe there is nothing so curative, nothing so lenient, nothing so patient, nothing so sweet, nothing so gentle, nothing so considerate, and nothing so adaptable, as the Divine nature. There is nothing that goes down to the infinitesimal want like that Divine love which is supreme.

O, take away my Jehovah, but do not take away my Jesus! When I behold the God that sits back of universal thought, and back of immediate power, that reigns in the vacuity and vastness of eternity, I behold One who is most venerable and admirable, and it makes me shudder and tremble; and the more I look at it the worse it is: but let me look at One who loves the poor, and is sympathetic toward them, and is able and stands ready to do in my innermost soul what my mother did for me, waiting until I had grown out of childhood, and helping me all the time, — let me look at such a One, and think that he is patient with men while they are being developed from weakness to strength, and I feel drawn to him. Give me that view of Christ, and I am strong for myself, not only, but I have strength by which to go forth and preach Christ to my fellow-men.

A speculative Christ you will have to preach, many times; you will have to preach a doctrinal Christ; and his governmental relations to men you will have to preach; but the mainstay and power of your ministry must be in this: *the preaching of Christ as the Lover of sinners*. God so loved mankind that he gave his Son to die for them. He loved them before they had shown repentance or reformation; he loved them while yet they were at enmity to him; and he gave them the best gift that he had to give.

PREACHING MUST BE ENFORCED BY PRACTICE.

So, then, once more, in preaching this Christ, the fact must come out — it ought to come out, at any rate — that the identification between Christ and the truth is

to have an answering element in you. Christ said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart." It is as if he had said, "I am the exemplification of my own teaching. Do I talk to you about meekness? Look at me and see what I mean. Do I talk to you about love? Look at me and see what I mean. Do I talk to you about giving your life for those who are around about you? Look at me and see how I am doing it. Do I talk to you about being patient under provocations? See how I act under provocations." He carried in himself his creed, and said to men, "Learn of me."

Now, in your ministry you are to reproduce that which you desire to impress upon men ; and you can never reproduce the heart by the head : you can never reproduce a spiritual truth by a philosophical idea. You must arouse the higher life of men by exhibiting to them the thing itself which you are aiming to develop in them. Christ preached, being himself a representation of humility and gentleness and meekness and disinterestedness and love ; and you are to follow his example in this regard. You will not preach effectually either in the pulpit or in the pew until you can show the fruits of the Spirit. When you can do that, you will preach to some purpose.

I think that if there were a church of two hundred men and women on the globe, who were united in the enthusiasm of their higher moral feelings, they would make their way in the world like an army with banners. The reason why churches are so defective, and

why their power is so limited, is the want of that contagious enthusiasm of soul which they need to enable them to resist every temptation, to abide in the spirit of love, to overcome evil in every form, to endure trial whenever it shall overtake them,—in short, to be like the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Put into the various relations of life one or two hundred persons whose life should be exactly conformed to the example and teaching of the Saviour, and sooner could men stand before the compound blow-pipe than they could stand before such a living exemplification of the gospel as it is laid down in the New Testament. What we lack is not theology; simply to live upon that would be like gnawing a bone: what we want is life,—*life*, — LIFE!

THE TRAITS OF JESUS EXPANDED TO INFINITY.

I had occasion to say, in a former lecture, that you must beware of locating your present Christ in old Jerusalem. Now you see how it is, that when you wish to carry the thoughts of your people to the ever-living Christ, you are to do it in such a way as to develop a sense of his loving and forgiving nature. He is not different in heaven from what he was on earth, except in method. You know not how spirits live; you know not the conditions of spirit-life; but you know that every one of those truths which he showed on earth he showed under great disadvantage. You know that on earth he was limited and restricted; and if, under such circumstances, he pitied men, how is it in heaven? He has not lost the quality of pity there, but it has taken on greater power and scope and re-

source. Did he have disinterested love upon earth? Then in his heavenly estate it is expanded boundlessly. Did he on earth give himself that others might not perish, or suffer? That he is doing in heaven to-day, including in his mercy all intelligent beings in the universe.

There is no one who carries so many burdens as God manifest in Christ. There is no one that carries so much sympathy and so much succor as he. There is no one who, like him, bears the wants of the race, as a father and a mother bear the necessities of their much-loved children, doing more for those that are threatening to break away and go loose than for those that are obedient and virtuous. He is one who said there should be "joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."

This is Jesus transferred, in our thoughts, to the infinite sphere. And when you represent to your people God's heart in the heavenly land, make it up of elements which were manifest in the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. The true use of those elements is to mold them together, exalt them to the upper sphere, and then direct your people from the letter to the spirit. And by and by, as your hearers more and more follow this glorified conception, there will be a likeness in them to the Master; and they shall grow more and more radiant, more and more like him, more and more joyful, until he shall come for them.

THE PREACHER'S REWARD.

And, young gentlemen, it matters but very little

what titles you get here, what emoluments, what confidence, and what pleasure; for when you shall stand at the coming of the Lord, in the gateway of heaven, saying to him, "Here am I, and these whom I have brought," one greeting, one look, from him will repay you for every groan, for every sorrow, for every sadness, and for all the waiting that you ever knew upon earth. You are sons of God walking in disguise. What you do now you know not.

I can conceive, since the extension of the use of electricity, of a man, some old Beethoven, deaf, sitting in his room and playing on an instrument half a mile away, by means of wires connecting that instrument with the keys that are under his hand. I can imagine how, as he rolled off wonderful strains of music which he could not hear, an audience, unbeknown to him, might be gathered about that far-off instrument, listening, music-struck.

In this world you are playing on keys whose response is in the heavenly land, where you cannot hear, but angels listen to it; and when you return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon your heads, you will be among the happiest of all that have lived upon earth, — kings and priests unto God.





VIII.

SINS AND SINFULNESS.

March 15, 1874.

I SOMEWHAT fear, this afternoon, that I shall render myself liable to misapprehension, — a thing so rare that I might venture upon it as a luxury, perhaps, if it were not for the importance of the theme which I purpose to discuss, namely, the subject of *Sins and Sinfulness*.

HUMAN SINFULNESS A FUNDAMENTAL FACT.

I suppose I have as deep a personal consciousness, and as strong and abiding a sense of the sinfulness of the race, and of the indispensable need of Divine interposition in behalf of men on account of sin, as any man with my faculties could have; and, therefore, in the course of my statements, I must not be understood either as lowering the importance, or as in any way doing away with the fact, of that doctrine, which underlies theology. For, although the grand architectural facts of scientific theology are the existence, the will, and the government of God, yet the fundamental fact is the sinfulness of man. That fact is to theology what disease is to medicine. Unless there were dis-

eases, there could be no science of medicine. There might be a science of hygiene, but there could be none of remedy; and unless there were sinfulness in man, there could be no doctrine of repentance, of new birth, of atonement, or of Divine inspiration and recuperative power, — in short, almost nothing would be left.

THE SCRIPTURAL *versus* THE SCHOLASTIC MODE OF
DISCUSSING IT.

And yet it is remarkable that our ideas of sin, for the most part, have come to us neither from the Gospel nor from an original observation of facts as they are, — that is to say, neither from the authority of Christ nor from scientific induction. The questions as they have been mostly discussed have come down to us from the schools. They may be none the better and none the worse for that; but, as a mere matter of fact, to a large extent the questions which have concerned the minds of thinkers in theology, and which run through all my remembrance as I was trained to discussion in the seminary, and which were supposed to have a most important relation to the right founding of Christian ministers, are questions which we have derived from the philosophy of the schools.

Christ never, in a single instance that I can discover, defined the nature of sin. Nor can I find a single instance in which he declared that the race were universally sinful. That form of statement, which is so common with us as to be supposed to be Scriptural, is not found in the teaching of the Saviour, at any rate, whatever may be the case in respect to the Apostles. I do not mean by this that there is no hint, that we

ought not to find it out, and that there may not be a very powerful influence exerted by philosophical inquisition: I merely say that such is not the way in which Christ preached. He did not preach universal *sinfulness*: he preached about *sins*. He did not preach the abstract philosophy of wrong-doing: far more; assuming universal wrong-doing, he dwelt on the elements of recovery, and of the power of repentance, of the new life, and of Divine succor. He continually pointed out to men, and to each kind of men as he met them, their special sins. He did not say, "Your nature is depraved"; he said, "Go, sell all that thou hast: come, follow me, and great shall be thy reward in heaven."

Now, when a man loves money, it seems rather hard to tell him to give away all that he has, and he shall be paid up in heaven; the time to wait is so long! But the keynote of that man's life was struck; and he went away convicted, probably, ten thousand times more than he would have been if the philosophical and general doctrine of sinfulness, which included him, had been taught to him. For it may be laid down as very certain that anything which is predicated of the whole race, and which belongs to any individual man in common with the whole race, will not very much disturb him; if there is to be that which shall disturb him, it must be something which is personal to him, which is peculiar to him, which singles him out, and which makes him ashamed and sorry for himself; whereas, things that unite him to all his race in very many ways take off the edge of consciousness, and abate self-condemnatory judgments.

Nevertheless, in theology we find generic questions rather than specific; or, that which is specific is remitted to the sphere of ethics or morality.

More than that, there has grown up, as distinguished from the doctrinal preaching of sin generically, a kind of contempt for preaching against specialties, as if that was superficial; as if it belonged rather to the department of morals; as if to preach on *sins* was not nearly so efficacious as to preach on *sinfulness*; and so the general disposition has been greatly insisted upon, while specific issues have not been made so much of.

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL.

First comes the question of questions, — that of the origin of evil; and if all the books, all the tracts, all the pamphlets, all the sermons, and all the articles which have been written on that subject were gathered together, and heaped up, not the pyramids of Egypt would be so large as the pile which they would make; and if all the passions which have been excited in the discussion one against another were concentrated, there would be fire enough to burn them all to ashes.

As to the origin of evil, this is to be said: We know just as much about it as our fathers did, and not a bit more; they knew as much about it as we do, and not a bit more; and neither did they nor do we know anything about it.

Suppose the schools of medicine, instead of discussing the structure of man, instead of investigating his organization, instead of acquainting themselves with the nervous system, the venous system, the arterial system, the muscular system, instead of inquiring into

the wholesome conditions, the morbid conditions, and the remedial conditions of the body, — suppose that, instead of doing these things, they (the Homœopaths, the Allopaths, and the others) should quarrel as to the origin of disease, as to how it came into the world, as to who was sick first, and as to why that person was sick? That would be no more a waste of time and brains than, in considering the interior or spiritual structure of man, to burrow after the origin of evil, and follow up the questions which spring out of this one, going back and asking, “Why did God make the world as he did? Why did he not make it in some other way?”

THE NATURE OF SIN.

Then comes another discussion, which I do not say is unimportant, though I do say it has relation to a side of your work other than that of preaching, — namely, the discussion, in certain stages of the development of the theological system, of the question as to the nature of sin. The question is asked: “Is it physical and inherent, so that a man is born into this world with a sinful nature, that in some way comes down to him from his father, as scrofula or a tendency to gout, or anything of that kind, often does? Is sin a kind of physical secretion?” This view is scarcely held now; but there has been a wordy war on that subject. Much time has been spent by men in discussing the nature of sin as a physical secretion.

Then there is the question as to whether it is a moral secretion; as to whether a man has a sinful nature; as to whether a man intellectually and mor-

ally is sinful, in such a sense that the moment he begins to act he begins to do wrong; so that the very first throb of his being is positively evil, unconscious, hereditary, and inevitable.

Of course, if a man is thrust into the world with a nature which is born to strike, he is no more responsible for striking than a clock is, being made to strike.

Yet the theory of the inherent necessity of sin is at times taught with a vigor that would lead one almost to suppose that a man would sin if he did not sin, as defeating the end for which he was created!

Then comes the question, still more important, or rather still nearer to touching bottom, as to whether sin is personal, voluntary, and yet flowing from an original fountain of sin, — in other words, as to whether Adam was the reservoir and we are the faucets. I do not undertake to say anything on that subject. I am not in the chair of didactic theology. I may simply say that I do not think it is profitable to present that view in preaching, as a means of awakening men, or of leading them to conversion. I do not think that its effect upon the understanding, upon the imagination, or upon the heart is likely to be edifying.

THE DOCTRINE OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY.

Then, sin is defined in all sorts of ways, as if it were a very desirable thing to get a generic and comprehensive term for it. It is defined by affirmatives, the law of selfishness being represented as predominating in men; or it is defined by negatives, representing that there is an entire absence in men of love to God and of a sense of God.

Now, in connection with that, comes a mode of discussing sin which I suppose does not prevail in our day as much as it formerly did. (I say *I suppose*, because, although I believe in going to meeting, I myself almost never hear sermons preached. I cannot, therefore, judge of what the preaching is in the majority of churches.) I allude to the doctrine of total depravity, as it used to be preached. I hold, not that every man is responsible for the statement of a doctrine which can be defended according to an obscure or abstract system, but that every man shall preach any doctrine that he preaches at all, so that it shall defend *itself* in the court of judgment of the men to whom he preaches. I hold that to preach the truth in such a way as to cast the shadow of a lie upon the minds of men, is to mis-preach.

If you say that men are born imperfect, and that therefore not a single man answers the end, or fulfills the destiny, for which he was created; if you say that men are so created that the recuperative power is in God, and not in them; if you say that, in the very nature of things, men, partially sinful, are every one of them in need of the new birth; if you say that human nature is such that, first or last, the moral sense, the reason, the social affections, and every appetite and passion have sinned in their turn, and do sin,—if you make a statement like that, I suppose no person will object to it: but if you make a general statement, to the effect that men are totally depraved, you will be misunderstood; you will run the risk of confounding together all grades of right or wrong, and of almost effacing the distinctions between good

men and bad men, or between men that are relatively good and men that are relatively bad; and, what is more than all, you will run the risk of violating the moral consciousness of men;—they *know* that, as thus broadly put, it is simply not true.

You can never make a mother, who, with devoted love, is giving up night and day for her babe, repent of that love, and look upon it as if it were an evidence of her total depravity. You can never make a friend who ventures his life for another friend, without second thought and without recompense, turn about and write down that act in his journal as being an evolution of total depravity.

My father used to say to me in regard to the better impulses of men who are unregenerated, "My son, those are nat'ral affections. There is no such thing as a good act unless it comes from gracious affections. It is not until an act is inspired and qualified by the Divine Spirit that it becomes good."

Well, I can say that as much as he said it; but I hold also that the Divine Spirit is universal. I hold that the physical man finds sufficient development and stimulus in the physical globe that is around about him; that the social man finds motives and stimulants enough in his social relationship; that the moral and spiritual man derives peculiar and special stimuli from the Divine Soul, which overhangs all things, and is dealing with all things; that that part of our nature which is essentially spiritual always comes from the inoculation of our souls by the Divine Soul; and that all of that in us which is good is as directly the fruit of the Divine Spirit, as all that is beautiful and fertile

in the fields is the fruit of the sun that shines upon it. Without summer there can be no harvest; and without the sun there can be no summer. The distinction which my father drew between natural and divine fruits of the Spirit in the soul was not well founded under such circumstances.

You will ask me, "Do you not believe that all men are sinful?" I do. "Do you think that there is any action of a man's heart that is perfect?" Relatively, no, I do not. "Do you believe that men are totally depraved?" I believe that men are sinful, and that they sin continually, to such an extent that they need repentance, change of heart, Divine help, so as to become new creatures in Christ Jesus. I believe in their need. But I do not undertake, with my plummet, to sound their depths, and to say that men are totally depraved,—that is, that each particular faculty has qualities which carry it out of such and such and such assignable limits.

THE ERROR OF THE UNITARIAN DOCTRINE.

There are advantages which come from a wise generalization on the subject of sinfulness; but there is much mischief in the generalization which has come down to us on that subject. We live in an age in which there is progress in various departments of knowledge, and in which men are looking at things from a different standpoint and with adaptations different from those of other times, which have largely lost their force now; a powerful reaction has been taking place. There are two elements coming in. The first is that reaction which assumes—I think unwisely,

and without proper observation — that men, so far from being sinful, only sin once in a while, just enough for variety; and that when placed in favorable circumstances men prefer to do right, and do do right. This is what is supposed to be the peculiar heresy of the Unitarian defection, though it has nothing to do with the Trinity or with the Atonement. In point of fact, that development carries with it a denial of the fundamental sinfulness of human life, and teaches that the qualities of a man's mind are essentially virtuous, and that when circumstances favor, for the most part the actions of men are right; thus, invariably and inevitably decreasing in men moral depth, the sense of the Divine nature, and intense spirituality, for which is substituted that poetic or mystic sensibility which has characterized all those sects that hold a loose doctrine on the subject of men's sinfulness.

Now, there is to this extent some truth in that view, — namely, that the faculties of men are by nature set to do right things. Anger is, in and of itself, both right and necessary. In and of themselves combativeness, and destructiveness, and self-esteem, and love of praise, and love between man and man, and benevolence, and the sense of beauty and taste, — these are intrinsically right; and single actions proceeding from these are right: but that is not their statement. Men are building in this life; we are rearing up our personality, and the question is not so much whether the original faculties in their innermost nature are right or not: the question is, When men are building a character through the action of these multiplex faculties, do they use them so that from day to day, and from week to

week, and from month to month, and from year to year, they are working out excellences of holiness?

A man, for example, takes his palette to paint. His colors are all right, they are broken right, and they are mixed right; but when he begins to make his picture, and put in his tints, and produce effects of light and shade, he may fail utterly. The instruments with which he works are right, there is not one of the pigments that is not perfect, and he puts them on with dextrous strokes; but when he combines them, and makes the foreground, the middle-ground, and the distance, and puts his objects of life into the picture, it is a botch. He uses right elements, but his picture is a failure. It is the power to compose with right elements right things, that he lacks.

The alphabet is all right; there is not an immoral element in it; but how many wicked books have been written! And music is right, in every note; and yet it is made to cater to the lusts and appetites and passions.

The alphabetic qualities in men are right enough; but the lives which they spell out with those alphabetic qualities, the habits which they form from them, the characters which result from them, are far from right. When we come to see what men produce with the right faculties with which they were endowed by God, we cannot but pronounce them to be sinful. And the sinfulness is all the more glaring because with right things men build wrong structures, because with right fundamental elements they evolve characters which will never fit them for their higher usefulness and happiness here, and still less for the spiritual life, and for communion with God, hereafter.

DIFFICULTY OF RIGHT LIVING.

I do not consider it to be an easy thing to live right. I look upon life as I look upon a child. If I did not believe in the all-bathing atmosphere of Providence and love, I could not wish to see another child born into the world, so great is the peril, and so wonderful, beyond all ordinary calculation, is the work that is going on. We hear the clanking of the loom, and we see the fabric that is woven and rolled upon the beam; but we do not see the pattern that is woven in it. We take a hand that is empty of skill, and we teach skill to that hand. We take a foot that is void of knowledge, and we teach that foot knowledge. A child has no acquaintance with qualities, and we teach him how to distinguish qualities. He is ignorant of construction, and we teach him how to construct. He goes on learning human nature, his own nature, his physical nature, with his appetites and passions, every one of which needs to have a special drill and education.

There are some twenty or thirty tendencies in the nature of a man; and each one of them is to be developed in accordance with right judgments; and he is to carry them in such equilibrium and proportions that through all his life there shall be right gradations of light and shadow. They are to be so controlled and managed that there shall be symmetry of form and true balance.

Who can drive one fiery horse with ease? To drive two is harder still. But, if fifteen or twenty are in a string, what man's hand is skillful enough or strong enough to hold the reins and keep them exactly to their paces?

Here is a man, born of woman, surrounded by adverse influences, biased, stimulated at times, depressed at other times, paralyzed with fear, intoxicated by inflamed feelings; and yet, the physical, the social, and the moral elements which operate upon him, he, as a creature of study, of business, or of public life, is to so adjust as to carry every part of himself in rectitude and in proportion. Things that are right enough in themselves are wrong oftentimes by their combinations, by excess or lack, by the uses to which they are put, by want of right composition or gradation. So that life is a thousand times more imperfect even than men think; so that the question of perfection is almost a question to make men laugh; so that the idea of sinlessness and true purity and absolute rectitude is absurd. And the more a man knows what powers are in him, how these powers are to be co-ordinated, and how they are all to be made to point towards the one Divine element of love; the more he comes to understand that he is a creature of two worlds, who is to look across this world to the other, and so order everything here that it shall land him there, — the more does he realize how vast the problem of life is. There is no other problem like it. There is no other problem that involves so much risk. There is no other problem the pressure for the solution of which is so intense. The question of furnishing a character for eternity and for companionship with God is one which transcends every other.

THE SCIENTIFIC CONFIRMATION OF BIBLE DOCTRINE.

Now, it is in connection with this problem or question that there comes up the scientific rebound which

is beginning to teach so much about the incarceration or incarnation of the spirit in the body. It is in this connection that we are learning more about the subject of heredity, or the transmission of qualities to ourselves from our ancestors, and of the effect of circumstances, of blood, of laws, and of institutions on the passions, the appetites, and the various elements of the mind. All these powerful external agents are coming in, and are producing a necessity for knowledge in scientific directions on the part of those who are to preach to the coming generations,—a knowledge which will enable them to meet the assertions or the skepticism of those who are bringing in new conditions of mental philosophy.

I have from early life followed closely the schools of science, and gathered such knowledge as I could on every side in respect to the actual condition of man,—with this addition: that I have, unlike the scientists, taken such material facts as have been evolved, and illuminated them by the light of Divine revelation, and looked at them from a higher standpoint. And I feel that in the times which are to come no man can be a faithful preacher to human nature, no man can discriminatingly preach of man's sins and sinfulness, who does not take into consideration the developments which are being made, and which are to be made; and I feel sure that there is nothing which will be found so admirably connected with science, and so parallel with it everywhere, as the Gospels of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think it will be discovered, when the best knowledges have been derived from the schools of science, that Jesus Christ was the greatest scientist of the world's

history; not in respect to lower forms of matter, but in respect to mind, which is unquestionably the very topmost thing in this creation of God upon the earth. I do not fear that science will sweep away any fundamental doctrine. On the other hand, I believe that all fundamental doctrines will be confirmed by science, and that by reason of the light which science throws upon them they will shine out more strongly than ever before.

INDIVIDUAL REPENTANCE.

I have spoken of Christ's method. He preached repentance everywhere, as John had preached it before him. And you will take notice how substantially these two preachers of repentance were alike. You will take notice also, that when men came to them asking, "What shall we do?" the answer was very different from that which we are prone to give. One answer was given to the soldiers, and another answer was given to the Pharisees. In each case the answer was adapted to the mind of the inquirer. The modern way, in preaching the doctrine of man's sinfulness, is to make an attempt to create an atmosphere in which all men shall feel a sort of down-pressing danger in consequence of universal and distributive guilt. When we get men into an intense state of moral alarm, we point them, as the saying is, to the great Refuge. But that was not the way with our Saviour. He sought to make all men discontented with their present state; he aroused in them a sense of its incompleteness and of its dangerousness; he preached repentance: but when the question came up, "What is repentance?" it was made *personal to*

each. He developed the new life on the basis of the old life; and it was something special in each particular person. A miser cannot repent as a spendthrift can. They are both inconsiderate and selfish, but the process of repentance with one is different from what it is with the other.

Generics never take hold of men. It is specifics that take hold of them. If you say to a man, "You are a sly old fellow," he shrugs his shoulders and does not care; but if you point him to the fact that you saw him prying open your letter and reading it, he is very much ashamed. If you say to a man, "I guess you are not very particular about how you get your money," he smiles, and rather thinks that, on the whole, it is not as bad as it might be; but if you say to him, bluntly, "You stole, and I can convict you of it," and refer him to the circumstances, that touches him. A specific charge is oftentimes effectual where a generic one is not.

A bunch of needles put together is as blunt as a board; but if you take each one out, and use it by itself, it is sharp, and pierces as all of them together will not.

If men are called to repentance in a bunch, they will be very apt to repent in a bunch, and their repentance will be very superficial in every way; but if they are called to repent individually, they will repent, if at all, individually, and their repentance will run along the line of facts related to their conduct and state.

You cannot repent of Adam's sin; you cannot repent of that part of your nature in whose creation you had no part; but you can repent of that which you are in

your lower, your middle, and your higher nature ; you can repent of your delinquencies, negative and positive ; you can repent of your wrong-doing ; you can repent of the unspirituality of your whole life. Every man can take a measure of himself.

Now, there is every reason to believe that when the Master preached to the harlot, the harlot had her own special repentance ; and that when he preached to the thief, the thief had his own special repentance. Repentance was the spirit of God wrestling in each individual's heart according to the nature, the character, and the development of that heart.

HOPEFULNESS OF CHRIST'S PREACHING.

Christ taught that all men were in need of regeneration,—of the new birth. Undoubtedly he taught repentance in such a way that it was believed to be an instantaneous work ; or, that it was so connected with the lower human will that when a man was going wrong he could stop and go right. He undoubtedly insisted upon it that it was a thing which was to take place at once. He said to the thief, "Steal no more" ; to the lecherous, licentious man, "Be lecherous and licentious no more" ; to the cruel man, "Cease your cruelty" ; to the drunkard, "Drink no more" ; to the godless man, "Think of God, and reverence him." Repentance, according to his teaching, was an instantaneous work in this sense : that there was a point of time in which there was a *change* from the design of wrong-doing to the design of right-doing.

He preached, also, that the Divine power was indispensable to this change ; but he preached it as a

matter of hope, of inspiration, and of courage to men. He taught that men were in great need of this Divine power ; but he represented it to be to them what a surgeon is to a wounded man. If your leg is broken, you cannot set it ; if an artery is severed, you cannot stanch the blood ; and you cannot live unless the surgeon comes. He is a benefactor and a helper. And when Christ taught the necessity of the dependence of men upon God, he preached so as to stimulate men in the direction of their necessity for the Divine. The effect of his preaching was to tear up self-conceit by the roots. It was to give man a sense of his power to exalt himself by the aid of the Spirit. It was to teach him where the remedy was, and that he could have it if he wanted it. The Spirit is always ready ; and the drift of Christ's teaching was that men needed a new birth, and that, needing a new birth, they needed the Divine Spirit ; and that the Divine Spirit was waiting to be gracious to them. It was always on the side of hope and effort, and not on the side of casting anchor and waiting, that Christ taught. From his teaching men would naturally deduce the fact of their absolute need of higher succor than their own ; but they would also come to this through knowledge of sorrow for special sins, and repentance of them, and thus be encouraged to seek the higher help and really help themselves.

THE GERMINANT VALUE OF MORALITY.

Now, your preaching of sinfulness should never take away from men a sense of the value of morality. It should modify their extravagant ideas of its value ; but to tell a man that nothing is good unless it is the fruit

of an after-converted state, is to subvert the very elements on which you build, and the very instincts to which you appeal. The whole Bible, from beginning to end, takes it for granted that there are in men separate notions of truth, of honor, of justice, of rectitude, by which they are to compare, to judge, and to accept; and if you take away from men the thought that in morality is found the basis on which you can build the higher life, you destroy their courage and paralyze their effort.

Men say, "Is not morality good?" I say it is good. "Is it enough?" No; no!

When the vine first throws out leaves in spring they are great, broad leaves; and men say, "There, those are fine leaves; do you tell me that they are good for nothing?" No, I do not tell you any such thing; but I say that it will be a good while before you will make any wine out of them. What are leaves good for? Why, to make blossoms. What are blossoms good for but to smell good? They are good for evolving the final form of fruit. Leaves and blossoms are relatively good, but their purpose is not fulfilled until they have developed something better.

Now, morality is a seed which is relative to something higher, which it is to produce. It is that out of which is to grow the better states of men. It should therefore be precious in men's sight. I would not say to young men in my parish, It does not matter whether you are good or bad, truthful or untruthful, just or unjust, pure or impure. On the contrary, I say, Your morality is good so far as it goes. I say to you, Love God in such a way that your love shall in-

flame your whole spiritual nature ; but if you will not rise to that, the highest and truest conception of manhood, then at least do the next thing below that. If you will not do that, I beseech of you, do right things even from selfish motives. It is better to do right things from feelings of personal interest than to do wrong things. When a man begins on this ground, he *begins*, although the beginning is but as a grain of mustard-seed. It is not enough to end with, but it is enough to begin with. A man who begins at the lower foundations of motive is in a situation such that you can inspire him and lift him higher and higher. In dealing practically with men you are obliged to act on that principle or method of dealing with him. You can never, by revival after revival, no matter how powerful it may be, take a coarse, rude nature, whose inward states and outward habits are those of sin and sinfulness, and bring him at once into a condition of high spiritual vision and of glorious Christian development. What can you do ? You can transform his purposes at once ; you can set them on inward elements of character ; but a whole life's work is to be employed to carry that character up, little by little, and little by little.

Men are like vagabond boys in the street. They are lying, thieving, dirty, ragged, uncombed rascals ; and they who love them go out after them ; and going out after them, they never take the children that are rosy, sweet-faced and cherry-lipped, well taken care of at home. They may love these most ; but they are after the sinful ; and they take the little ragamuffins and bring them into the reformatory house, and wash their

skin, and take off their rags, and clothe them aright, and persuade them, in one way and another, to submit themselves to the necessary restraint, and abide in the asylum, and become scholars, until at last, after weeks and months of instruction and drill, and after various experiences under the pressure of moral influences, the boy says, "I am going to make a man of myself." When he says this, so far as his determination is concerned he is converted. He has made up his mind to live a different life; but the object which he has before him is not yet accomplished.

Now, transfer that idea to the case of a man in a congregation. This man is converted. He has been living on a lower plane of moralities, and he makes up his mind that he will rise to a higher plane; but has he reached that higher plane? Has he developed in himself the spiritual knowledge towards which he aspires? Has he wrought out the corresponding elements, social and moral, which belong to true manhood? No, but he has made a start for it. He has laid the foundation of the building, and it will rise gradually, through various stages of evolution and care, until the last perfect form is attained.

If you preach to rude congregations you must do as missionaries do. When missionaries come home they generally have a less opinion of theology and a greater opinion of the Bible than almost any other class. They find in missionary life how wonderful are the adaptations of Scripture to the treatment of men in lower conditions. They find that there is nothing that requires so much patience, so much charity, and so much waiting, as human nature in its primitive states. They

find that nothing is slower in unfolding than undeveloped men. Men are so extremely low, so very imperfect, so thoroughly sinful, that when they are preached to, and they turn about and begin to do right, it will be at a point very far down in the scale; and it is only step by step, gradually, that the Divine Spirit can be developed in them. It is long afterwards that they reach the higher life. After death they will be perfected, but not before.

OPPOSING DANGERS OF GENERIC PREACHING.

Let me say one more thing in this direction, namely: that in preaching the doctrine of sinfulness to men there is danger of overaction. It works in two ways; producing discouragement on the one side, and presumption on the other.

Have you never heard men say, in a rallying, bantering manner, "O, well, of course I did wrong; but you know it is human to err. To be sure, what I did was wrong; but all men are sinners, and I am one of them"? There springs up from this preaching a sort of impression in the mind that a man is a sinner anyhow. "Yes," they say, "of course he is, everybody is, a sinner. We are all going along together. We keep step one with another." Such a generic method of presenting the doctrine of sinfulness tends to destroy conscience in men, and they seem to think that when they sin they are walking in accordance with the constitution of things, and that whatever may be the mischiefs resulting from their action they are no more responsible for them than a sour-apple tree is for having sour apples, or than a thorn-tree is for having thorns. If you con-

tinue preaching, "All men are sinful, *all men are sinful*, ALL MEN ARE SINFUL, O, ALL MEN ARE SINFUL," they will all of them justify your opinion, but not one of them will feel sinful because he lives as he does, any more than I feel so because my hair was naturally brown, or than you do because your hair was naturally black.

Yet, as I shall show at another time, this generic doctrine of universal sinfulness has its place, and is a power, in the active work of the ministry; but after all, you must specialize. Otherwise men will go to one or the other extreme,—that of presumption or that of discouragement. Sensitive natures will brood the matter inwardly, and will feel such a sensibility to sin, and will have such a sense of their own vileness, as shall take away from them all spring and all hope, and really leave the mind almost paralyzed. I have heard of not a few cases of this kind. I have known of persons (for instance, women) who, without any sense of special sinning, were made unhappy and wellnigh insane from a general impression of their own sinfulness. I have one in my mind now.

There are women who are martyrs. If there are what may be called Protestant Saints, I think they are the women who forbear a loving wifeness, and go into a sister's family to be a mother to children that they have not themselves borne, to take care of them, and to labor for them, loving them and nourishing them and sacrificing self for them, asking no name and no reward outside. And yet, I have known women of that sort who had such a withering sense of their unworthiness that they hardly dared to raise their eyes

to God because they felt so sinful, and had such an impression that their life was a waste. Sometimes under such circumstances they are even demented with this intense conviction of sinfulness. There are cases in which persons have such a sense of their own inherent wickedness, and of the wickedness of every action which springs from the qualities of their nature, that their very aspiration is paralyzed. And it is an awful perversion of the truth where it is preached so as to produce such results. Phenomena like these are, I think, among the most piteous exhibitions that the world can look upon.

You must therefore beware of preaching generics in one way, so as to make men callous and presumptuous, and, in another way, so as to make them oversensitive, and drive them into despair.

You are so to discriminate in preaching that every person shall have his own character, his own tendencies, his own peculiarities specialized to him. You are to preach so that every man shall, as it were, be called by name; so that his attention shall be drawn to his own special life-work; so that he shall be led to root up all the poisonous weeds, and prune all the right plants or tendencies in his nature; so that he shall aim at the full development and symmetrizing of his whole character in the direction of hopefulness, of trust, of aspiration, and of a sense of the Divine power; so that he can work out his own salvation, because it is God that is working in him, to will and to do of his good pleasure.

As to the question whether it is best to preach sins or sinfulness, I say, Both, — sinfulness in a measure,

but sins continually, sins all the time, so far as you take that side in your preaching. Sinfulness is generic; sins are specific; and although every man needs to know that his whole nature is low and requires Divine inspiration and re-birth, yet, that which will touch men most sensibly, and arouse them most effectually, and bring them to a new life most certainly, is that which is specific.

SPECIFICATION OF CHARACTERS.

The next question, which I shall not more than mention this afternoon, is this: not, What is sinful? but, What are the modes by which you can make men conscious of sinfulness? For yourselves, study the doctrine of sin in all its ramifications; but when you come to preach, the distinctive thought with you should be, "I know that men are sinful; but they do not feel it: how shall I make them understand it?"

Here is a man that sits and smiles under your preaching with the serenest contentment in regard to himself. You say that Man is depraved,—yes, if you please, *totally* depraved; you say much (I care not how much) that is condemnatory of Man; and yet he is smiling and contented and happy. How are you to reach that particular man with such a sense of sin as to bring him down?

Here sits another man in the congregation, and hears you preach on the subject of sin; and he is no more affected than the rocks on Mount Sinai were when the law was given to Moses. His heart is as cold as it can be; and he says, "Our minister is doing that thing

very well to-day, — *very well.*” How are you going to assail that man in such a way as to bring a moral consciousness of personal sin home to him? Must you wait for that mysterious influence of the spirit which comes with revivals, and which is likened to the wind, which “bloweth where it listeth,” so that you “cannot tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth”? Is there to be a second moral deluge which shall come without any instrumentality on your part? Is there not a way in which you can preach sin so that a man hearing you shall say, “I am a sinner, not on account of my undivided dividend of Adam, but on account of my special disposition and life”?

There are others who are equally devoid of feeling. They live in the sweet amenities of life. They are too amiable and gentle and polite to deny anything that you say from the pulpit. No matter what you say, they smile. If you say to them, “You are a great sinner,” they say, “Yes, I know I am.” “It is your duty to repent.” “Certainly, certainly.” “Don’t you think the time has come when you should begin?” “I do.”

It is with men as the Western Methodist minister said it was with grain. Said he, “Grain that leans away from me I can cut: it is grain that leans toward me which the sickle slips over, and which I cannot cut.”

Now, in going out into your congregations, your work will be to specialize, not simply single sins nor single faculties, but characters. Your work will be like that of an engineer, who must learn general principles, but who, when he goes into the field to

survey, to build, or to bombard, must substitute, for his foregoing education in generics, practice in specialties.

On the true method of doing that work I shall, by the help of God, attempt to throw some light in a future lecture.





IX.

THE SENSE OF PERSONAL SIN.

March 11, 1874.

THIS afternoon I am to speak to you as to the best procedure in your ministry by which to inspire men with a sense of their personal sinfulness.

CONVICTION, TO CARRY ASPIRATION.

Why is it necessary to inspire such a feeling? For what purpose is it to be done? It is only that your people may be incited to reformation. The use of preaching to men the doctrine of sin is that they may be led away from sin. The test of right preaching on this subject is not its agreement with any preconceived theory: it is its agreement with the fundamental sympathies and laws of the human soul, manifesting itself in the renunciation of sins, or in an effort to renounce them, and in the betaking of one's self to the higher life. I say that it were worse than cruel to preach to men their lost condition, and their guiltiness, and their corruption before God, if that were all.

Human life itself sets us the example. If men walk the street heedlessly, thrusting themselves against little

children or unprotected women, we rebuke them, because their rudeness can be corrected and should be corrected ; but who ever rebukes a man with a shrunk-en leg for halting and causing inconvenience in the street ? By the consent of all mankind, we are silent on that subject.

If a man be found in anger, or in any other unworthy feeling, making up hideous faces at persons, we rebuke him because he is doing that which is improper, and because it can be changed ; but if a man be paralyzed, or if he were born with a hideously ugly face which he is obliged to carry all his life, we never say anything about that, because he cannot correct it.

It is the correctableness of sinful conduct and life that gives the whole reason for dwelling upon this subject. Therefore, the sense of sin inspired in men is only the reverse, and should be the concomitant, of a sense of aspiration. It is our business so to discourse to our people that they shall feel not only a sense of wrong and wrong-doing, but a corresponding sense of right and right-doing ; it is our business to preach to them so as that out of our preaching shall come that influence which shall impel them in the right direction from the wrong direction.

EXPERIENCE THE TRUE TEXT TO PREACH FROM.

This is the fundamental idea on which I construct my remarks to you this afternoon ; and in the first place I assert, that it is comparatively useless, that frequently it is worse than useless, to preach to men of their sins in no other way than by a retinue of texts, and by statements of the authority of the Word of

God ; because that part of God's Word which is authoritative is that which lives consciously in us. You must translate into men's actual experience that which is taught by letter in the Word of God before you can appeal to it and make them feel that they have violated it. For a book is a book, and but a book. If it be a book that declares the Divine will and the Divine judgment, far be it from me to say that there is no use in employing it ; but I declare that it is auxiliary, that it is interpretative. The work must first be developed in a man's own understanding and in his moral consciousness ; and then his experience and sensibility must be *corroborated* by the declarations of the Word of God ; but mere textual preaching, a mere array of texts so long that it looks like a sinner's funeral procession, will not convict men. It will teach them what the Bible says ; but what we want is to make them *feel*.

Generic preaching lies under precisely the same conditions. As all rivers empty into the ocean, so all specifics will first or last empty into generics. All facts and all personal instances of special dispositions and acts in the individual are materials which every man, if he has any philosophical tendency, finally generalizes, and forms into some sense of disposition ; but to preach the generic first makes it very difficult for men to specialize, whereas to preach the specific first will by and by lead men of themselves to generalize.

Therefore it is that the true preaching of sinfulness is the preaching of individual and personal sins. In order to preach truly, it is far better that you should

prepare your way, not by any abstract statement of law or rule of conduct, but, as far as possible, by concrete statements.

You never could make a person who was born in a village, who had seen nothing of pictures, who, finding in himself a blind impulse to paint, had worked his way up so far as to paint a lion-sign for a tavern, and who was praised for his skill by all his neighbors,—you never could make such a person believe that he was not an artist. All the abstract arguments in the world would not convince him of this; but bring a genuine painting from out of the French school, of a lion in an African desert, and set it down in his shop by the side of his crude banner-picture, and go away without saying a word, and the man coming in of a sudden, and looking at the one and at the other, will step back, and say, “Ass! I thought that picture of mine was a lion, but I have found out that I am an ass,—that is all. I will never paint another picture.” He has been resisting statements of his well-meaning friends to the effect that there was not very much artistic skill displayed in his picture, and has looked upon them as attempting to “repress genius,” and he would not believe anything that they said about it; but the moment there is put before him a real thing, an ideal picture, he lays aside his notion that he is an artist, and now all the world could not produce the opposite impression in his mind. What he needs now is to be buoyed up, and encouraged to think that, with self-denial and perseverance, in time he can attain even to that excellence which he sees exhibited in the picture which throws his own work so entirely in the shade.

Now, in simply preaching to men that they are selfish, that they are proud, that they are vain, and that they are without holiness, you cannot produce much effect upon them. Well, yes, they all suppose that they are so; the Bible says it, the Catechism echoes it, and the minister re-echoes it. It is the general opinion of the whole neighborhood that they are all sinful; that they are sold under sin; that they are in bondage to sin. This is iterated and reiterated, until by and by people say, "Yes, we are all sinners; none of us are clad in holiness; we are all under the wrath and curse of God. But how much do they feel it? What reality is there in it to them?"

THE GENERIC MADE POTENT BY THE SPECIFIC.

As I shall have occasion to show by and by, these forms, these limitations, these statements, these definitions, being filled up by vital personal experience, become of immense potency and usefulness; but alone, without any filling up, they are of very little validity.

If a man can be shown an act of heroic benevolence, and if then his own daily dripping selfishness can be put right alongside of it, he will hardly need a sermon. The two things will preach to each other.

If a man, full of avarice and bound up in stinginess, has presented before him the very opposite traits of character in all grace and beauty, the ideal which he gets, the impression which is made upon him, the practical development of the right which he sees, becomes the revelator of the wrong, and gives him such a potent sense of that wrong as can be given to him by no argument and no merely philosophical statement.

By and by, when, by such a comparison, you have prepared a man's mind so that at last he is brought to an understanding of his condition, of his lack, of the reason of his deficiency, of his limitations, and of his sins, then it is a very different thing to preach that men generally are sinful; it becomes an idea with a new meaning. The true way of preaching is not to preach the general sinfulness of men, and then leave them to find out their sins, but to open up to them their sins, so that they may see them by a comparison of what they are with the ideal standard, and then bring them from the consciousness of personal transgression up to the highest generic view.

SCRIPTURAL *versus* THEOLOGICAL PREACHING.

In preaching these elements, men must follow the Scripture method, as distinguished from the theological method. I do not wish to speak evil of dignities, nor of customs, nor of the wisdom of men; but woe be to any generation that is not better for the power that it has to differ from that which went before; and woe be to any generation whose principle, in looking back upon great men, great thoughts, and great developments, which have prepared the way for later generations, is to look upon them only as upon idols, to worship them. It is a fact that one set of men having lived makes the state of the next set larger, and enables them to go further in the line of development than their fathers did.

Now, I think there could be no such cruelty as to preach to this generation as Jonathan Edwards preached to his. Not that there were not magnificent

strains in his preaching; but there was such a sense of the Divine authority, such a sense of the rights of Divinity, and such a sense of the sinfulness of sin, as amounted, not always, but frequently, to a species of inhumanity toward men because they were sinful. And there has been since his time, and since the times of other great men who preached revival sermons, what I may call a savage way of preaching man's sinfulness, — which is not the Scriptural way. The Bible method of preaching the sinfulness of man is the parental way. The Scriptures are full of human feeling; they are full of considerateness; they are full of gentleness; they are full of variations of approach; they are full of differing modes of development; and what the pulpit needs more than anything else in preaching man's sinfulness is the feeling, on the part of those that preach, that they are joined to man by his sinfulness the same as by his sorrow, and that they are to be helpful to him, and to feel toward him as a father feels toward his son, or as a mother feels toward her daughter.

SYMPATHY WITH SINNERS.

It is not the man who has the most profound sense of the glory of God; it is not the man who has the most acute sensibility to the sinfulness of sin; it is the man who carries in his heart something of the feeling which characterized the atoning Christ, — it is he that is the most effectual preacher. It is the man who has some such sorrow for sin that he would rather take penalty upon himself than that the sinner should bear it. It is not the man who is merely seeking the vindi-

cation of abstract law, or the recognition of a great, invisible God ; it is the man who is seeking in himself to make plain the manifestation of God as a Physician of souls, sorrowing for them, calling to them, and yearning to do them good. It is the compassion of men who, while they know how to depict the dangerousness of sin, oftentimes its meanness, and always its violation of Divine law, yet recognize that they can never bring men so easily to an admission of their sinfulness by representing God's wrath and producing in them a feeling of terror, as by holding up before them the Divine compassion and kindness.

"Come here!" says a father to his child; "you played truant, it seems." "No, I did n't," says the boy. "You did n't? Now, don't undertake to deceive me; you did! You see that whip; you know what is coming; own that you did it." "I did n't do it." "Well, how came you not to be at school?" "I was sent on an errand." "Who sent you?" "The schoolmaster."

Suppose, instead of approaching the boy in anger, and driving him into a succession of lies through fear, the man had called him to him, and said: "Have you had a pleasant time, my son? You have been weak to-day. I am very sorry for you. I know you were tempted; and you gave way to the temptation. If I had been with you I could have helped you. Perhaps I can help you some now. I am very sorry that you did that. I don't mean to punish you; but I want to help you out of this weakness."

All the time the boy's tears are running down his cheeks; he does not deny the charge; and when his father goes on to point out the indecorum of which he

is guilty, the ruin to which it will lead him if he persists in it, and the bad example which he has set in the school, he feels worse and worse; and when finally the father asks, "What will your mother think of it?" he boo-hoos right out. He cannot bear to have his mother told; and the father says, "If you will try to do better, I won't say anything about it"; and he is exceedingly grateful to his father; and the next time he is tempted to play truant all his best feelings rise up to hinder him; and all in him that is generous and loving says, "I don't want to do it."

In the one case the father came to the boy with wrath and penalty, and the boy hardened himself and resisted. In the other case, the father came to the boy with the same charge, but he did it in such a way as to bring him into a condition in which his best moral feelings were roused against temptation.

Ought we not, then, to gather some lessons from things that are taking place through the providence of God in every Christian household, in every household that is controlled by Christian affections; and, above all, by that supremest of all inspirations, love? Are they not, in some remote sense, revelations of the Divine plan and the Divine methods? When we turn from these things to the New Testament, and see the way of our Lord, may we not understand that one mode of preaching to men so as to bring them to a sense of their sinfulness is to preach to them, I will not say excusatorily, I will not say in a manner which will make sin seem less sinful, but so that they shall not think of you as standing over them like a sheriff who has a writ to serve upon them, or who has a sentence of execution

which is to take them to the block? You are to preach so that men shall feel that the things which you say to them are spoken out of kindness and love. I do not think that ministers quite enough put themselves out of their profession.

KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY TO SYMPATHY.

A boy at the age of about ten or eleven years rather turns to the subject of the Christian ministry. He rather selects his company with the view that he may be a minister. He rather thinks he shall be. He knows that his mother is praying for it all the time, and he would like to fulfill her hopes. He reads good books, and goes with good boys, and is a good boy himself. When he goes to school, he is a model boy. He does not have any association with bad boys. When he goes to the academy, he is still rather remarkable as a good boy; and by this time he begins to know it. When he reaches the college, he goes right into the college prayer-meeting, and is soon made a deacon in the college church. He walks in the ways of the wise, and really does not know much about human life outside. He has very little acquaintance with what are the troubles of bad and high-spirited young men in college. And as soon as he gets to the theological seminary he is put to bed with Emmons and all the other excellent saints of New England. He lives with them. And when he is ordained as a minister he goes to all the associational meetings, and to all the councils, and is everywhere in close relations with his own kind and class. So it comes to pass that he is one of the most exemplary of all the men that go into the pulpit. But, really, he knows next to nothing

about the way in which ordinary men live in this world. He cannot put himself in anybody's place.

Jesus descended from the loftiest position, took upon himself the form of a man, humbled himself, became a servant, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, — or, as we should put it in our modern phrase, the gallows. He walked among men from the highest to the lowest, and made himself personally acquainted with every trial and sin. He was tempted in every faculty, and yet without sin. He knew what was in men, and he knew how to make allowance for them. He was their High-Priest, symbolized by the Jewish high-priest. Like ourselves, he knew what human infirmities were, and he had compassion upon those who were out of the way. This was the peculiarity of Christ, — that he sympathized with sinners.

With how many young professional ministers is it the case that they do not know the great round of weakness and infirmity, as well as guilt, which prevails in the community! How men are born into life, — with what limitations; with what different degrees of opportunity; with what biases; with what partial education, wrong education, or excellent education! Some men are born with might and power of will and passion almost irresistible. Some men go mourning all their life long that their stream of success runs so slender, and is so full of shallows and sand-bars. Some men, in their feelings, are swept as leaves in autumn by the tempest; and some men never know what a breeze of feeling is. Some men are invincible by money, and others are vincible by it. Some men, in their pride, are like snow-capped mountains, grand, high, white,

cold, solitary. Some men are born with melancholy, and some with hope. Some men are happy in their associations and avocations, and others find themselves entangled by false alliances, by mis-partnerships, by ten thousand influences from which they are struggling to break away. Some men are all the time condemning themselves, and others are all the time overestimating themselves. There is a great whirl and round of human nature into which men are thrown, and where the strife is intense, and the result doubtful. Some men sin and hide their sin, and others sin and do not know how to hide it. Some, having sinned, sink down under a sense of shame, and some are buoyed up by a feeling of pride. Some, when cast out by reason of their sins, are conscious that they are better than many who are kept in. Some who are doomed to poverty feel that they are more deserving of prosperity than those who have it but do not earn it. The great round of life is full of mistakes and of mysterious influences, against which men stagger and strive, in various degrees. And the man who occupies the position of a minister of the gospel should have such a realizing knowledge and sense of human want and weakness and wickedness, that the thought of these things would bring tears of sympathy to his eyes.

If one in this spirit reads the New Testament, and sees how God deals with sin and with sinners, he will find no letting down of the ideal of goodness as against sin; he will find no lowering of the standard of holiness as against sinfulness. That ideal and that standard must be kept up forever. "Let God be true, but every man a liar." No matter what comes, keep the standard

and the ideal high. But, after all, working with that ideal should be full of patience and sweetness. Your sorrow for the people to whom you preach should be greater than their sorrow for themselves can be. You are to make yourself, therefore, in the place of Christ, a sufferer for sufferers, sent to bear sin in its pain and penalty, without its guilt.

There are unsuspected influences in the air. Men are afraid to carry their consciences into their life. This you ought to understand ; I think you will be convinced of it when you come to preach ; and I believe it will help you to preach so that men will be made to feel their weakness and sinfulness and infirmities.

CONVENTIONAL AND REAL SINS.

Men in the community at large are seldom trained with a universal conscience. In general, they are trained with what might be called a conventional conscience,—a conscience which is largely ecclesiastical. There are, in the first place, conventional sins. The church has its organization and its house of worship ; and men feel that it would be a great sin to treat this edifice as they would an ordinary structure. Especially are men trained in the Roman and Episcopal and in other denominational churches to feel that there is a sanctity in the building itself. And there is no reason why we should not suppose that Divine grace inheres in stone and plaster as much as in bread and wine. So men are taught to feel that lack of respect toward a venerable church is next to contempt of God.

A man walks half-way up the aisle in a church, absent-minded, with his hat on, and whistling, and coming

to his senses checks himself, and thinks he is a great sinner. He has whistled in church ! He has worn his hat in the house of God ! I should say, young gentlemen, that you had better not wear your hat in any house ; and that whistling in a dwelling-house is always bad manners ; but whistling in a church is considered by many as a gross offense. And this man, going home, says to his wife, " I really feel bad, my dear " ; and he tells her how he wore his hat and whistled in church ; and she exclaims, " Why, that was shocking ! I hope nobody saw you." He is thoroughly ashamed of himself, and feels guilty besides. The next morning he gets up, and understanding that there is a man in the neighborhood who wants a horse, he thinks he will sell him his, — which is a good horse, but is slightly lame on account of a contracted hoof. The lameness does not show, however, except when he is put to hard work. So the man sells his horse. He knows that it is unsound, yet he dexterously conceals the fact, and the bargain is consummated. Now does he go back to his wife and say, " O my dear, I am a great sinner " ? Not he !

From this you will see what I mean by a conventional sin, as standing over against a real sin.

THE SUNDAY QUESTION.

In that way, you shall find that men are often very conscientious about Sunday ; that is, strict Puritans. They will not do any work on Sunday, nor even on Saturday night. On Sunday they will not allow any newspapers to be read in their families. Neither will they allow any except " Sunday books " to be read.

Their children must go to meeting in the morning, and, if possible, again in the afternoon. There must be nothing done of a secular nature until after the sun has gone down below the horizon. One minute and it is irreverent, it is breaking Sunday, to tell a funny story. The next minute down goes the sun, and then the story may be told. The very persons who are thus particular about observing Sunday and fast-days will, even on Sunday, sit and discuss their neighbors' faults without a shadow of the feeling that they are striking a thousand fathoms deeper into sin than they would be if they were to "break" Sunday.

I admire Sunday, I admire the old Jewish Sabbath, and I think New England owes much to it. One of the sweetest of my reminiscences is that of the old breezy hill-top in Litchfield on Sunday; of the Sunday sun, and the Sunday birds, and the Sunday shimmering Mount Tom, and the Sunday elm-trees, and the Sunday scenes, some of which were touching, and some ludicrous. As I recall it, Sunday was a great moral power. But how about uncharitableness? How about avarice? How about deliberate selfishness in ten thousand customary ways? How about anger? How about the spirit of petty revenge? How about such things as these, which go right to the root of moral character, and are like rust on steel, eating to its very substance?

And, nowadays, what is the public sentiment of the church? What is the sentiment of those who meet each other in church communion? What is the sentiment of persons who sit over against each other at the tea-table, and delight themselves in serving up their fellow-men, and enjoy the little repast of this fault and

that suspicion? How many people feel that the want of heart, the want of love and tenderness, the want of benevolence, indicates a lack of that higher love which makes God God? How many persons are there who feel that these sins of disposition amount to immeasurably more than customary and ecclesiastical sins? Does the pulpit do its duty in this matter? Do men who preach sufficiently enlighten their congregations concerning it?

How is it in the matter of quarreling? There are parishes in New England where men have had quarrels which they watered and pruned and nourished for twenty years; and it would seem to be their pride to hand them down as a legacy to their posterity. In the West, when men quarrel, they knock each other down and roll over, and get up and take a drink, and that is the end of it; but in New England men do not dare to take the law into their own hands and settle their difficulty, but they *remember* it. They carry the insult, the wrong, the grudge, the hatred; and it breaks out into evil speaking, backbiting, and all manner of little mean retaliations. Men who cherish bitter animosities toward each other yet go to the same communion-table, and sit under the same preaching, from ten years to ten years, and all the time they do not feel that Mount Sinai, if it could speak, would thunder at them; but they are talking about their hopes, and their hopes, and their hopes!

Now, I want to know if any abstract preaching of sinfulness, and letting alone the real and specific sins of the commonest sort, can be a faithful and fruitful preaching of sinfulness?

RELATIVE PROPORTIONS OF DIFFERENT SINS.

More than that, there is a want of perspective in men's conscience or sense of sin, so that they overestimate some offenses and underestimate others. For instance, you will find persons who, if they sit down on the Bible, suddenly spring up with a most overwhelming sense of sin ; or, having neglected some minor duty, they will groan over that as though it were a most serious transgression. In their minds there is no distinction between sins in regard to their magnitude. They have no sense of the relative proportions of sins, and of their effects in the community. Therefore men frequently indulge themselves in the most ruinous courses without compunction, and then make a great account of little peccadillos, manifesting the intensest contrition concerning them.

There is great need, therefore, of maintaining in the minds of men a clear insight of the nature of sins, and thus giving them a true standard by which to judge of sinfulness.

RELATIVITY OF PREACHING.

That leads me to say, next, that there are very few persons who are so round, so all-sided, that any part of them is a true test of right or wrong. Taking society at large, you will find that it breaks itself up into groups or classes of men, that only one or two of the faculties of the human mind are employed by each class, and that these become the tests.

For example, you will find that some men have an intellectual test. It is the agreement between this or

that course of conduct and the rule or the law. By nature or by training almost the entire sensibility of their minds has been centered in intellectual processes, and ideas control them. So, when you preach in a large city, if you are an able man and draw men toward you, you will find in your congregation a great many who, while you are touching this man, that man, and the other man, will themselves never be touched. You will appeal to their heart, to their manhood, to their sense of shame, to their better feelings, but you will not reach them. By and by, however, there will come a man who will preach a different kind of sermon in your pulpit. The majority of the people will say, "I hope you are not going to have that man exchange with you often. I do not know why, but it seems to me that his sermon was the driest that I have listened to for many months." But these men of ideas will say, "I never had anything come so near to me as that man's sermon. I do not understand how it was, but he made me tremble." The center in them was not moral at all; it was intellectual. The tests by which they were accustomed to judge of right and wrong were purely intellectual; and therefore they were struck with that sermon and affected by it.

You must make up your mind, as ministers of the gospel, that you are to strike everybody, in your preaching. A minister must be like a magazine, provided with a varied armament. If you are going to batter down a fort, your battering guns must be very heavy. If you are going, on the other hand, to pick off men at a great distance, you must get telescopic rifles. If you are going to shoot water-fowl, you must take a heavy shot-gun. If, as an ornithologist, you are going to

shoot small birds, you must take a small shot-gun and small shot. The kind of game which you are going to hunt will determine the sort of gun, the caliber of the arms, which you will require. Because you are a man of taste, you must not preach taste all the time; because you are a man of feeling, you must not preach feeling all the time; and because you are a man of conscience, you must not preach conscience all the time.

MANY ROADS TO CONSCIENCE.

Young men, however much it may tax you to think, you *must* think, if you are going to be ministers. There must be that in your preaching which shall take hold of the men to whom you preach. There will be different classes of minds in your congregations, and you must adapt your preaching to those different classes. There will be those who will be touched more by intellectual preaching than by anything else, and there will be those whom intellectual preaching will scarcely touch. There will be those who will respond to an appeal to the conscience, and there will be those who will not be at all affected by such an appeal. There will be those who can be more easily reached through taste than through any other channel; and you will reach them effectually by showing them that they are out of harmony with the universe. There will be men whom you cannot touch by appealing to their emotion of benevolence and kindness, but whom you can touch by appealing to their conscience. An abstract sense of right and wrong is a strong constitutional center in many persons, and they are at once overwhelmed and oppressed when they are made to feel that they have

violated the principles of rectitude. But a practical sermon, which is called "a sermon to the conscience," and which screws the conscience down and down and down, and wellnigh crushes it, will leave a large part of your congregation without feeling, or with very slight feeling, because that is not the point where they determine right and wrong. Conscience in them has never been trained or brought out. There are men whose whole life determines right and wrong by its relations to kindness or unkindness.

I know, and you know, great, large, front-headed men, men with high foreheads, bountiful men, men with large features, who cannot bear cruelty or anything that looks toward it. To them anything that hurts is wrong. They interfere with family discipline, saying, "Now, don't, don't punish that child." If it is a merchant's clerk that has gone wrong, they say, "You had better look at the young man more kindly, and give him another chance." They interfere with the execution of the laws. Anything that is cruel, or that gives pain, they look upon with disallowance; and anything that is benevolent receives their approbation. Kindness is the test-center with them. Show them that sin is unbenevolent and you have them. If you cannot show them this, it may be a violation of God's law, and they will wink at it; it may be an insult to the majesty of Heaven, and they will encourage it; it may be sending men down to perdition, and they will not look with great disfavor upon it; but show them that it is harmful to living men, and give them instances of its harmfulness, and you will touch them so that tears will run from their eyes, and they will begin to say, "Well, now,

sin is sin, and must be put a stop to"; but the moral sense of such men is in sensibility to benevolence, and not in conscience nor in the intellect.

Some men will be far more likely to be convicted if you show them that their life has been unbecoming and inconsistent with the higher forms of manhood; that it has not been chivalric nor heroic.

Here is a man of pride. He has been accustomed to judge of himself and of his relatives by that element; but his conscience works with his pride, — for, let me tell you, there is not one man in a thousand of average men whose conscience is pure and simple. Everybody, almost, has some faculty that is auxiliary to conscience. You cannot touch conscience in the majority of men except through some auxiliary faculty which opens to it. One man is touched in his conscience through the understanding; another, through benevolence, as I have already said; another when you have convicted his ideals. In some cases conscience lies at the bottom of a man's self-esteem; and if you reach it you must reach it by arguments addressed to his estimation of himself. Others have conscience so allied to shame that if you rouse it you must first rouse up their sense of shame, and make them feel that they have violated that which is praiseworthy. You cannot touch their conscience in any other way.

A man is a thief. He breaks open houses. He sets fire to barns. He murders men. Among his companions he does not feel the first qualm of sensibility. He is arrested, and brought into the village where all his old friends reside. He is thrown into jail. The whole community are full of indignation. One after

another of his former acquaintances come and look in on him as though he were a wild beast. He begins to feel the concentrated sense of the indignation and blame of the whole people. His love of praise is very strong ; and now, under the influence of detection and disclosure and the public sentiment of the community, he begins to have a feeling of remorse. He did not feel remorseful at all in the midst of his confederates ; but when he was brought where shame operated upon him his conscience waked up, and being waked up by such help and stimulus, it became mighty in him.

You cannot get at men's consciences unless you know what are the auxiliary powers by which you can reach them. In some fear is auxiliary ; in others veneration is auxiliary ; and, what may seem strange to you, but what is as true as that you live, in still others taste is auxiliary.

A musician who is exceedingly irascible, and sensitive to discord, will understand how, if he is at discord with the Divine government, he is sinful.

There are many persons who talk to us in this way : I cannot worship in your churches ; but let me, on a Sunday morning, go into the fields, in the midst of the scenes of nature, and I think I can see God there. My dear old venerable father used to pooh-pooh that ; he used to call it moonshine ; and I used to say, " Yes, and sunshine too, father ; for I am just one of those persons." I never had, under preaching, anything like such a personal feeling of holiness, or such a sense of the nearness and overpowering presence of the other world brought to me, as through the faculty of ideality, or that principle of the soul which takes cognizance of fine, beautiful things, — the sense of taste.

I know that when I was in the Luxembourg, and saw the first real regiment of paintings that I ever saw in my life, everything retreated to my brain. I did not feel the floor when I walked on it. My head seemed like a globe of fire. I never felt the sanctity of the love and presence of God so near to me, and I never had such an appreciation of the beauty and glory of infinite justice, as I did in the gallery of pictures at the Luxembourg. I might have sat — as I did — in Calvin's chair at Geneva without any emotions of that kind. I appreciate the life of Calvin, his great work, and his excellences; but no associations connected with him could produce such an effect upon me as I received at that time through the sense of taste.

My dear old father never could sympathize with that feeling. He thought that though it might sometimes be excused, it was a wishy-washy sort of piety. And there are many who feel that this sense of exquisite beauty cannot have much to do with religion. And yet, in many natures it is auxiliary to their conscience; and in such cases through it you will reach the moral sense when you cannot in any other way.

A man says, "Such a lady thinks herself so literary and so fine, that she has gone to the Episcopal Church and thinks that she cannot stand our preaching. The fact is, she cannot stand the right up and down truth. She does not like that kind of preaching which opens the door of the heart and shows a man that he is a traitor before God, and is bound to hell and damnation; and so she has gone among the Episcopalians." How much knowledge of the mind of man has a person who makes that criticism?

SINFULNESS TO BE PREACHED TOWARD HOPE.

Through every one of these avenues of which I have spoken the conscience may be approached. Some men are so organized that they have a conscience which can be reached directly ; but the majority of men have consciences which can be aroused only through auxiliary powers ; and it is your duty to know what these auxiliary powers are, and through them to address men's consciences so as to be sure of gaining access to them. For a man's conscience is like a man in his house, who is very busy, and who instructs his servant to look at every person who comes to the door, and let him in if he looks all right, and not otherwise. Many a man's conscience is not reached because the truth is not properly presented to him. The approach which we make to men's consciences and feelings in religion must be made in such a way as to excite in them, not combativeness, not resistance, but hope and aspiration.

There are times, I suppose, when a congregation which has been under your care for a time may need to be roused up by what I should call extravagant preaching. I remember hearing my father say that when he went to East Hampton he found that the church there had subsided into a state of lethargic content. He could not by a direct appeal to their feelings produce any uplift ; and so he resorted to another method. Said he, "I took decrees, I took foreordination, I took election, and I took reprobation, and I let them off all at once ; and pretty soon I saw that the people were getting mad. I kept at them till by and by I had the whole church about my ears ; and they

had waked up ; and then I began to put in the gospel."

Now, whatever may be the adroitness of such a practice as that (I do not undertake to judge in such a matter), the general rule, and the rule which, if you have the formation and training of your church, you will scarcely need to go aside from, is this: that all your expositions of evil and shortcoming should inspire hope in your people, and not despair ; that they should work toward reformation, and not merely toward producing in men the feeling that they are miserable sinners, like the Kentucky negro, who had been kicked and cudgeled all his life, and always expected to be kicked and cudgeled.

CHRIST'S WAY.

You know, on the other hand, that there are children who are so sensitive to their parents' wishes that the slightest frown, or shadow of a frown, throws them into tears. They want to do the things which will please their father and mother, and they cannot bear the thought that they have done anything to displease them. And you should give your congregations such a sense of the wrongfulness of wrong, and the sinfulness of sin, that they shall long for the right thing. Do not put your congregation into a mortar, and take a pestle, and grind them to powder. Do not make them feel all the time that they are miserable sinners, and that God may by and by come with a revival, and that there may then be a resurrection in the valley of dry bones, but that they have no power to do anything for themselves. Make them feel, rather, that the Lord

God, who made the earth, is the Father of all its people, and will help them, "working in *them* to will and to do of his good pleasure"; that he is the God before whom they are to give an account, and who has made himself known to them by the death of Jesus Christ; that he has said to the world that the nature of Divine holiness and Divine power was to be such as to recover and restore manhood; that the plenitude of divinity shows itself in this: that it brings forth in men that which reveals to them what is good and what is bad. You cannot preach of man's sinfulness too much, nor in too many ways, provided it develops in your hearers an earnest aspiration and a longing desire for larger knowledge. The effect of a true preaching of sinfulness is to produce in men continual discontent, so that they shall say, "I am not pure in my heart; I am not patient as I ought to be; I am not disinterested enough; I am too proud and too selfish." Where, in preaching, instead of simply making men feel that they have violated the law of the universe, you make them feel that sin is personal to them, and that they are sinful in the moral and social elements of their being, and in the conduct of their life, at the store, in the school, at home, everywhere, and that what is demanded of them is that they shall grow as men in Christ Jesus, I think you will have produced the effect which the Lord Jesus Christ sought in his preaching, and which the Apostles followed in their teaching.

Not that there are not occasions for the preaching of fear; but let me say to you, gentlemen, that the ministration of fear, pure and simple, belongs to men who stand on the edge of animalism. The whip for the

horse ; the goad for the ox ; and fear for that man who is the next remove higher. But as soon as fear has done its work, which is made necessary merely because men's hides are so tough, then they are prepared to get out of the way of it, and to be plied with something nobler.

Does fear die away, then ? No, it transmutes itself. It becomes an undertone. It no longer exists in its own absolute form. It adds itself, as a kind of color, to every other faculty of the mind ; so that conscience has its latent fear, hope has its latent fear, and love has its latent fear. It is no longer coarse, selfish, animal-like, but it gives stimulus and edge and inspiration and aspiration to each of the better feelings in the soul.

Do not think, then, that you must not preach fear. Preach it ; but, as soon as you can, preach it as belonging to everything which is beautiful, and sweet, and pure, and truthful, and high, and noble.

Whether you preach one view of sin or another, measure your preaching by this : Does it discourage men ? Does it drive them off from religion ? Does it make them more obstinate and self-willed ? Or, does it make men tender ? Does it enlarge their sense of infirmity ? Does it show them where infirmity breaks over into sin ? Does it make them feel that they need the down-shining, everlasting presence of the Divine Spirit ? If such is the fruit of your preaching of sin, your church will speedily be filled, and the work of Christ will go on under your ministration to the sanctification of the hearts of your people, as fast as the work of summer goes on when autumn is near at hand, and the sun is in its full blaze.



X.

THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIAN LIFE.

March 12, 1874.



HIS afternoon I purpose speaking to you on the subject of *Repentance, Conversion, and Sanctification*, — the three stages of Christian life.

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST.

What is a Christian? It is one who is undertaking to learn how to live as Christ commanded. What is enough to enable one to say, "I am a Christian"? On what ground may you, as pastors and teachers, encourage your people to feel that they are Christians, and to make a public profession of their faith in Christianity? Whoever gives you reasonable evidence that he has set out in good earnest to become a disciple — that is, a *learner* — in the spirit and school of Christ has a right to hope. Almost always the statement in my time has been that a man must have certain interior changes of which he, or somebody, should be conscious, — certain philosophical, interior conditions, which should evince their reality by outward life. My own judgment is that the definitions of becoming a Chris-

tian should be simplified and brought back to where they were in the time of Christ and his Apostles.

THE THREE ELEMENTS.

There are certainly three things which are implied, although they may not be consciously analyzed and distinctly set before the mind of a person who is a beginner in this new style of life, — namely, *renunciation*, *adhesion*, and *construction*. It will not hurt you to have substituted for the names “repentance, faith, and right-living” these less familiar names; for sometimes a new word sets a man a-thinking; whereas, if a word has been used from time immemorial, it is so smooth from handling that it is apt to slip through the mind without producing any impression. Renunciation is a resolute purpose to abandon wrong; a vivid discrimination of some kind between right and wrong, according to the intensity of the man (low if he be low, middle if he be at the middle, and high if he be high), accompanied by a desire to turn from that which is wrong. Adhesion is a distinct sense of followership; the acceptance of Christ, not intellectually, as we accept Sir William Hamilton in one school, or as we accept Comte in another school, or as we accept Herbert Spencer in another school, but as one accepts some ideal master whose personal life is a living representation of what he intends to be; and he who comes into the Christian life accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as the embodiment of that life which he means to live, and as the representation of that character which he means to form in himself; and it is to this Christ that he comes with personal adhesion.

SEED-TIME AND HARVEST.

Now, it is not right for you to make out a full definition of faith, as it exists when it has ripened in men, and come to its climax, and then say that a man is not converted until he has such a perception of Christ as that, and such a form of adhesion by faith to him. For we are not to test the beginnings of life by the phenomena of its maturity. You are not to apply to a new-born babe the tests which you apply to a man, who, by law, has attained his majority. A babe must be judged through faith, by what he *is* to *be*, much more than by what he is.

So when men begin the divine life, although some, under circumstances of which I shall speak, from the beginning give evidence of wonderful transformations, and have a very beautiful experience, yet, taking men collectively, you are to judge of them, not by what they say when they are catechized and taught what to say; but by what you know, looking at them with perceiving eyes and with understanding hearts, to be the actual condition of their inward state of mind. I know that persons who have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord by Christian parents, whose house has been a church, and whose daily life has been almost that of a catechumen, may be brought into a full disclosure of Christian life, with phenomena which will be ripe and ample; but often these persons were converted from the cradle. They were trained in their will, as well as in their other faculties, into Christian living, so that when the disclosure comes it is like the unveiling of a statue on

a public square. To the great mass it seems to have sprung into being then and there; while, in reality, it has been the work of the chisel and the mallet for months, and, it may be, through years. The disclosure is sudden, but the formation was not.

The seed-form of experience is enough, therefore, on which to encourage a man to say, "I am a beginning-Christian." If men are afraid to say, "I am a Christian," because they cannot stand all the tests of Christianity, let them modify their statement, and say, not, "I am beginning to be a Christian," which might involve some absurdity, but "I am a beginning-Christian. I have begun to be a Christian." How far have you gone? Have you renounced all sin? Woe be to that man who should dare to say "Yes" to that question. No man can tell what he has renounced of unborn things. No man can say, "I have cleansed my heart in innocency," in any modern philosophical sense of that expression. But as I understand it, and according to my conception of sinfulness, he can say, "I have made up my mind to abandon sin."

You will usually find that, to men of low and rude culture, sin is some one or two objective things, and their renunciation of sin will be mostly in regard to those distinct offenses. Higher than these, is a grade of men to whom sin is not only a series of acts, but a principle from which such series of acts have an outflow; in their case there will be a larger and broader renunciation of sin: but this larger and broader one is not to discountenance the smaller and narrower one.

BEGINNING-CHRISTIANS.

A man who has, according to his conception of right and wrong, chosen sides, and said, "By the help of God I am going to do right; I mean to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to judge by his example and commandments of what is right and wrong for me," — such a man, I hold, has begun a Christian life. He is a beginning-Christian. That which is abundant for the seed-time in the spring would be considered very poor for the harvest-time in the autumn; and that which is enough to begin this end of Christian life with would be far from satisfactory at the other end of Christian life. It is a great deal better that a man should begin, as Christ puts it, like a grain of mustard-seed, and go on growing through his life, rising and rising, as one ascends on an inclined plane, than that he should suddenly burst into Christian life with an affluence of experience, and with choral joy, and then go sliding down the other way through the rest of his life.

I am not disinclined to look with favor upon the dramatic experience of which I shall speak in a moment; but we are to be as little children in the Christian life, and the evidences of Christian life may begin with childlike experiences. I regard it as vastly important that this should be recognized in your ministry; because I think that multitudes of men, for lack of a recognition of it, are lost, — that is, that they stay away from the church and from God's people, and live an undisclosed life, or a partially developed Christian life, all the rest of their days; whereas, if they had

been taken by the hand, and it had been said to them: "You are a babe in Christ Jesus, but, being a babe, you have the seminal forms of manhood in Christ Jesus which you must bring forth and unfold, and carry on and up; you are a learner in the school of Christ, you are in the primary class, and you are to rise up through all the lower stages to graduation," — they might have been saved.

INFANCY NEEDS PROTECTION.

You must not mistake my meaning, and suppose that I bring Christian character and worldly character so near together that the point of distinction between them in their ideal forms is very slight.

Nothing can be more different from the natural character (that is, the unfolded nature of man) under the influences of this world, and the nature of man developed under the influences of the Lord Jesus Christ. But I say that the beginning of that transcendent character which we call *Christian* is very small and very feeble, and that you are to accept that beginning in the hope of the disclosure and the ending.

I therefore feel, when men have come to the evidence of being converted, that the throwing them off and making them wait, and refusing to admit them either into the church or into a probationary class, is unwise. Some ministers are in the habit of saying, "If this is the work of God, it will stand, and there is no danger of waiting; and if it is not the work of God, they had better be undeceived"; but I feel that this is not the true way to proceed. It is as if a man should take a new-born babe, and lay it out of doors,

and say, "Now, if this child lives till morning, why, it will be worth our while to take care of it; but if it does not, there is no use of trying to do anything with it." When is it that a child needs succor, if not in the time of its absolute helplessness? And where is it that man needs the most instruction and culture and shelter, if not at that point where the kingdom of God is as a spark of fire, or as a bruised reed. The reed grows tall and slim, and is so tremulous that it can hardly stand up; and some wild animal, having passed by, has bruised it; it still stands weakly, but so tender is the heart of God that, reaching forth, this bruised reed he will not break nor even bend. And he will not quench the smoking flax. That little point of flame, which burns blue and red, and rises and falls, and rises and falls, and seems ready to go out, on the top of the expiring wick, he will not extinguish. He says, "I will move so gently that the feeblest flame shall not be quenched; and thus tenderly and gently will I deal with the souls of men."

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, until he send forth judgment unto victory."

So you are to take the sparks and first beginnings of Christian development, and shelter them, and nourish them, and protect them, until you bring forth judgment unto victory,—until you produce a Christian character which overcomes the world.

THE FIRST STEP.

Now, the theory of the New Testament, — if it have a theory, — at all events the *practice* of the New Testa-

ment, seems to me to have been this : to bring men first, promptly, to a renunciation of every known wrong thing ; to the resolution, " I will break off my sins." That was significant everywhere, as the very first step. Having taken that step, men were brought to an immediate beginning of the higher and better life. The philosophy which lies at the root of that life is this : Such is the nature of Christian living that the moment a man begins to interpret it practically, it instructs him in that which he in no other way can learn so well.

First, the great principle of Christian life is disinterested benevolence, — love to God and love to man. Now, undertake to live according to that principle. Let him that stole, steal no more ; let him that drank, drink no more ; let him that was licentious, be licentious no more ; let him that railed, rail no more ; and let him that quarreled, quarrel no more. Let all known sins be broken off. Say to yourself, " I will follow Christ " ; and begin to follow him. When you are reviled, revile not again. If you do not learn what patience is in trying to fulfill that purpose, I do not know how you can learn it. If that is not a better sermon than any you could hear preached, I am mistaken. Let a man pierce you in the tenderest place with injurious words, when you have it in your power to blast him like lightning, and do you stand still and say nothing ; and if that will not teach you patience, then I see not how it can be taught to you. You are, say, in business ; now let a man, in a place where your very credit is at stake, and at a time when your whole commercial fabric is in jeopardy, with mildew lips destroy your reputation, and let it be reported to you, and

do you listen to the voice of Christ, that says, "Pray for him, and love him," — and see whether you will not grow in patience. If it were an abstract proposition, in the conference-room, O, yes, you could do it; but when to-morrow you meet the directors of your company, and the first man turns the cold shoulder to you, and then the next man, and then the next, and you see that your detractor has struck you to kill, and you have it in your power to disclose something that shall kill him, and you say, "I have set out to follow Christ; he reviled not again, and I must follow him, and I will follow him, though it kill me," — do you not suppose that that experience will open in you a knowledge of the sinfulness and temptation of the human heart? Though before then you had not known much about sin and the temptations to sin, when you had seen its interpretation under such provocation would you not know something about it? In all his wrestling with the world, let a man say, "I hold myself accountable to my fellow-men for the light of my reason." Let him say, "I hold myself not to have received this shining imagination of mine to make sparks fly for men to look at, but to be employed as an opalescent light for the comfort of others." Let him say, "I am strong, not that I may wrap my cloak about me, and walk my own way, but that I may help weak people to gain a sense of the new life." Let him say, "I am to give myself for men, living, as Christ gave himself for men, living and dying."

Introduce a man into this school of Christ, and let him undertake to obey the Divine commands in his business or calling during the day, and he will come

back at night, and say, "I have failed." He will feel, as all early scholars in that school must, that he has an imperfect lesson. But you encourage him, and say, "Where you failed to-day, you may succeed to-morrow." And to-morrow perhaps he does succeed where he has failed to-day; but sin breaks out somewhere else in his experience. So he goes on, little by little, in his endeavor to lead a Christian life; but he is made to feel, to know, to painfully realize, how little he can do of that which he knows he ought to do, without Divine help; and he appeals for help; and the prayers of such men under such circumstances come up to the throne of grace with an ardor which is irresistible, and God hears them. No man can go through Christ's school in that way without being convinced that he has need in his inward life.

VIVID EXPERIENCES EXCEPTIONAL.

Then, in advocating this mode of looking at men, and introducing them into the Christian course, the question would naturally come up, "Do you set aside all dramatic experiences?" No, I do not, at all! So far from it, I look at them with admiration. I do not wonder that people covet them. I strove after them long enough, but I never got them. And at last I learned to say, "If it please God, in the exercise of Divine sovereignty, to bring a man into a Christian life in a way conformable to his foregoing history, to his temperament, and to the laws that regulate him, who am I that I should call God's orthodoxy in question? Has he not a right to call men in any way that suits him?" And if a man is of such a nature, if he has

sensibility such that he has been carried through devious paths, and is brought at last into such contingencies that all at once there is, by reason of the instruction which he has received, and by reason of the peculiarity of his organization, an intense conception, an inlooking sense by which is revealed to him, not simply the sinfulness of his actions, but the sinfulness of his nature; if he is made to feel the amplitude of sin in him; if he wrestles with the consciousness that God is not in all his thoughts, that his soul hates God, and that he will not have God to reign over him; and if, in that mighty wrestling, more wonderful in the darkness of his soul than Jacob's wrestling in the darkness of the night with the angel of God, he is at last conscious that there is some bright, shooting, electric flash visible before him which gives him a sudden sense of the beauty of God in Christ, of the majesty of the Divine government, and of the grandeur of the Christian life; and if there springs up in him an impulse to rejoice and glorify God,—do you ask me if I believe that his experience has no validity? It is admirable! It is beautiful!

But this I say (as I shall show more at length at the end of the lecture, if I ever get to it), that you are not to judge all experiences by special ones. You might as well say, having read one of Milton's outbursts of the highest kind, "Now, I will not call anything in literature good unless it is as fine as that," as to say that you will not recognize anything as conversion which does not go as high as those experiences of which I have been speaking. I say that these are exceptional cases; and they are genuine, as poets are genuine; but

everybody is not a poet. They are genuine, as inventors are genuine; but everybody is not an inventor. You are not to judge of the whole in this matter by single instances.

THE POINT OF CHANGE.

You will, then, perhaps ask me, "Is not this the doctrine of 'gradualism' ? Do not you believe in preaching 'immediatism' ?" With all my heart I do. I believe in immediate decisions, I believe in immediate beginnings; but immediatism is simply a checking or stoppage from going in one direction, and beginning to go in another.

Did you ever see a vessel on the East River beating against the wind, and turning when it was about half-way across? The helm is put down, and the sails begin to shiver, and soon they become loose, so that they catch no wind; and the craft is going on and going round, little by little, until, by and by, first the jib takes the wind; the craft still goes on and round, until finally the mainsail takes the wind; and then, with every sail full and drawing, off goes the vessel on the other tack. And unquestionably there was a definite point of time when she stopped going in one direction and commenced going in the other. You might not be able to mark it; but you know that, philosophically, it must be so.

Where a man is going toward wrong heartily, and he is converted, there must be a time when he stops, and means to stop; for nobody ever changes his course from wrong to right by accident. There must be a time when he moves, or attempts to move, in the other

direction, no matter whether he can tell what that time is or not, and no matter whether there was any great convulsion in his experience or not. There is, in the case of every man who reforms his life, a point of time at which he ceases to go in one direction and begins to go in the other direction. There is the principle of immediatism involved in every man's conversion; and those who are walking in the ways of sin should be abundantly plied to stop at once, and at once to begin to walk in the other direction, as the first step toward entering upon a better life, — and for this reason: that what are called "resolutions" are not choices; they are simply step-stones to choices. That is a *resolution* where a man accepts an end without any reference to how it shall be accomplished. That is a *choice* where a man accepts an end, and employs all the instruments within his reach for the accomplishment of it. One is without instrumentality, and the other is with instrumentality. Therefore resolutions wither, while choices hold steadfastly. And you are, by all the means in your power, to bring men, not merely to vague resolutions, not merely to wistfulness, not merely to wish that they were Christians. I suppose there never was a man in the world, brought up with ordinary morality, that did not wish that he was a Christian. There never was a beggar in the world, probably, that did not wish that he was rich enough to make it needless for him to beg. There never was a lazy man who did not wish that he was industrious. There never was a drunkard who did not wish that he was temperate. There never was a man who had lost his reputation that did not wish that he was reputable.

There never was a man of any sort who did not wish for something better. But wishing is invalid. Choosing is the thing.

URGENCY FOR DECISION.

Now, when you see men set in upon from every side ; when you see how everything is working on them continually ; when you see how strong are the tendencies of business ; when you see what rivalries there are in the spheres of ingenuity and industry ; when you see what vast pressures are brought to bear on men by the love of wife and children, and by their companionships, congenial and otherwise ; when you see how the great round globe is filled with all manner of the most stimulating forces, which are molding and shaping the lives of men ; when you see that while, on one day of the week, their attention is called to higher themes and they form purposes of right living, the other six days, like six squadrons, come down upon them and sweep all those purposes away, — under such circumstances, it is necessary that you, as ministers of Christ, charged with the care of men's souls, should concentrate every influence possible to bring them to an immediate decision.

But it should be borne in mind that an immediate decision to do right is not an immediate formation of a right character. The preparations for a decision, and the consequences of choice, may be to any extent gradual ; but the choice itself, the subscribing of one's name on the roll of Christ, the writing of it where it shall not be effaced in this world, — this should and will be instantaneous.

EARNEST PREACHING.

I know that persons often think there is a want of dignity in this commanding men to repent ; that there is in it a lack of respect for persons' individuality ; that it would be better if you should bring your sermon as a bundle of thoughts, and lay it down at men's feet, and leave them to exercise their own free agency as to whether they shall accept your teaching or not. It is thought to be scarcely dignified and philosophical to spread out the cool and calm considerations of duty before a congregation.

To act upon the course which is implied by these objections would be exactly as though a general, dead in earnest, should send a wheelbarrowful of rifle-balls across his line to the enemy, and say, " We do not intend to fire at you ; please kill yourselves with these balls ! "

For what is a preacher ordained ? Christ says : " Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." I think I see one of these *dilettante* men, one of these modern eunuchs of sermons, who sits and walks before his congregation in such a way as not to disturb their equanimity, or to force upon them any considerations which are not agreeable to them. I can imagine one of them going forth, and sitting down on the bank of the stream where trout are to be found, and saying to them, " O trout ! here am I, and here is my basket ; please come forth, in the exercise of your trout nature, and get into it " ; and I can imagine him to go back home again, and say, " Pleasant was the meadow, and pearly was the stream, but the fish were proud, and signified their in-

tention not to come forth; and I respect their individuality." For my part, I do not believe in the manliness of any such mode of preaching the gospel. It comes from the effeminate philosophy of an effete manhood. I believe in downright power; and if God gave it to you, exercise it. I believe that I have as much right to bombard your hearts as ever Grant had to bombard Petersburg, by the artillery which I can bring to bear upon them through the reason, through the moral sense, through the æsthetic or the beautiful, through taste, through any faculty which belongs to human nature. It is fair play. My purpose is as noble as that which any man can have. No historic hero has such a purpose as every Christian minister has; for when empires fall and thrones crumble, souls will live. When all literature is gone, when the memorials of Westminster are forgotten, when everything in this world is swept into oblivion, God will live to rescue man from destruction, and bring him home to eternal glory. If a man's whole thought is of the cold pages of Cambridge-printed books, that is one thing; but if his thought is of heaven, immortality, and God revealed in Christ, then I tell you he had better be in earnest, or he had better be out of the pulpit.

GRADUAL CONCESSION.

But it will be asked, "Is there no place for gradualism, then?" Yes, there is a place for gradualism, if you choose to call it so. There is that which will have the effect, at any rate, of gradualism. I mean simply this: that I believe, very thoroughly, in such an early conversion, or such an early turning to God, that you

can hardly call it the action of the will, though it is that. When the outer umbilical cord is cut, the inner one is not cut; and after the child is born, it feeds from the mother's soul through years and years, as before it was born it fed from her veins. A child that is of a devout and loving nature, brought up at the knee of a devout and loving mother, is early inclined to God; and it is so trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that it never knows, and never ought to know, the time when it did not sweetly think of God, and attempt to conform itself to the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you can begin with a child, and train it in right ways while its experiences are yet nascent, while it wills through the mother's will, and thinks through the mother's thought, by and by it comes to a point where it cannot distinguish between what is itself and what is her influence. If you can bring up a child in that way, it grows year by year, step by step, and becomes a Christian, though no one can tell precisely when the regenerating change took place.

I have seen persons of the most beautiful life, of a transparent disposition, Christ-like, devout, and having every attribute of true Christian character, come before the Examining Committee of my church. I had on that committee good, most excellent men; but they had been trained in the old-fashioned way of questioning candidates for church membership. I recollect a man (he is in heaven now, and I have no doubt that he has laughed at himself before this) who invariably put this inquiry, "Do you remember the time when you felt hatred toward God?" I have seen persons start up, and say, in reply to that question, "Why, no, sir!" They were

scared. They remember the time when they felt hatred toward God! But this man never could be made to think that genuine work had been wrought in persons who had not gone through that peculiar experience.

I can conceive that a man who has grown unrestrained, and developed self-will in a feeling of independence, has thrown off the claims of God, resisting them with strong passions and animal forces,—I can conceive how such a man, when at last those claims were brought home to him, and the terrible consequences of his course were revealed to him, so that a great struggle was produced in him, he neither being able to let religion go nor to submit to its requirements,—I can conceive how he might have developed in him, not only a conscious resistance to God's will, but defiance of God. But how one who has been brought up at his mother's knee; whose earliest years were years of love to Christ Jesus; whose every thought has been addressed to the subject of right and wrong, and who has constantly endeavored to avoid the wrong and to do the right; who has invariably asked himself what Christ would think; who has been reared from childhood in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,—how such a saint could be supposed to remember having ever felt hatred toward God I cannot understand; and to put such a question to such a one is a desecration of the temple of the Holy Ghost.

So that it is as easy for persons to be converted and not know it, as it is for you to pass from one kingdom to another in the night, and not know it. There is a heavy snow-storm in winter, and the fences are all obliterated, and there are no visible boundaries be-

tween farm and farm, and a man starts out and goes to the house of a neighbor; he does not know when he passes that point which separates between his ground and that neighbor's.

THE USE OF FEELING.

But you say, "Do you suppose that a person can go into the Christian life as easy as that? Must there not be feeling?" Well, certainly; but I beg you to understand that the function of right feeling in life is to incite persons to right courses. In and of itself it has no value, unless it be to produce happiness in men, or right conduct leading to happiness.

How much feeling, then, must a man have? Just as much as is necessary. How much steam must a little yacht have? Just as much as will turn the machinery and propel the hull. But the steam required by that yacht would not be a thimbleful for an ocean steamer of five thousand tons. How much must that steamer have? Enough to turn its ponderous machinery. How much feeling must a man have? Enough to turn him from wrong to right. All beyond what is required for that is surplusage.

I build a mill on the river Bantam, where I caught my first fish; and all the year round that river supplies the motive-power which is necessary to propel the wheel of that mill, and it turns and grinds continually; but suppose I should build my mill on the river Amazon, would I be any better off? No; for I have all the water that the mill wants in the Bantam; and all that the Amazon had more than that would be waste, and would not do the least particle of good.

All that feeling is good for is to produce motion. It is motive-power. It is impulse. But persons have an impression that it has a certain kind of cleansing power, so that if a man is aroused to a sense of his sinfulness, and is steeped in it, there is some sort of an effect like that which is produced when yarn is put into the dye-vat, where it must be allowed to soak, and soak, in order to have the colors strike through. Men seem to think that conviction is a vat, and that the sinner must soak in it for an indefinite period, in order to be thoroughly converted.

But this is a mistake. I will give an instance which will illustrate what I mean.

A strong man in Ohio, a lawyer of repute and an infidel, went to the nearest county seat on court business. While there, he went to spend an evening with an old friend, a farmer, and a member of the church. When the hour for retiring came, the farmer thought in himself, "This man is one of the greatest geniuses in the State; and I know his opinions; how can I read and pray in his presence?" But he felt it to be his duty; so, with fear and trembling, he took down his Bible, and said to the man, "It is our time for evening worship, will you join with us?" Now, this man, although he was an unbeliever, was a gentleman, and he expressed himself pleased to unite with the family in their religious exercises. The farmer read, with a tremulous voice, a chapter; and then knelt down, half scared, and prayed, not knowing whether he was praying to God, or whether he was praying away from the lawyer. He got through the service, however, although it cost him a severe effort; but the effect on the lawyer

was powerful. He said to himself, "I know this man, and he knows me; and he never would have done this if he had not had a conviction that it was his duty. He had no purpose to gain; he sacrificed his feelings by doing it. There must be something in religion to enable a man to do such a thing." And the more he thought of it, the more his spiritual sense was opened; and as there was a revival being held in the place, he went to one of the conference-meetings; and at the close he stood up and declared that God had illuminated his mind, and that he was resolved from that time forth to live a Christian life. He had not gone through any tremendous wrestling or feeling; he was conscious of on great swelling gulf-stream that was sweeping him to damnation; he had no such experience as persons who have purposely lived wicked lives often have; but do you not think that he had feeling enough?

Let me put it in another way. Many men mourn that they have not had a fearful experience. They think they are shallow Christians because they have never had such a sense of sinfulness as they hear other people talk of.

Here are my two boys. Both of them have been quarreling, and they have both in their quarrel done great injustice to some neighbor's children. I bring in the older one, and he denies it. I convict him, after a great deal of wrangling. He stands out against my persuasion. He will not confess his fault. Finally, after much threatening and whipping, I subdue him, and bring him to a confession and to a promise.

The other boy comes in, and I say, "My son, such

and such things are said in respect to you." He begins to blush the moment I commence to speak ; and as soon as he hears me through, or before I am done with my statement, the tears roll down his cheeks, and he says, "Father, it is true, and I am ashamed of myself. I did what I am accused of, and I am thoroughly sorry for it." And that is the last of it.

Now, I want to know which of these two brothers has had the best time, which has acted the most honorably, which is the most manly, and which gives token of the greatest moral health? And yet there are many persons who think that there is a great advantage in being put into a caldron of conviction, and bubbling and boiling and stewing there, and that they are good Christians in proportion as they are mean, and refuse to submit to magnanimity and honor and manhood.

The moment right and wrong are made clear to a man, the moment he sees the celestial life standing over against the animal life, quick as a flash his thought should go from the wrong to the right. The quicker you can go out of a wrong course into a right one, and the less of punitive experience you require to lead you to make the change, the better. It is all wrong, this notion that a man must wait a great while for feeling, or for more feeling, before he sets out in the Christian life.

Say to men, "Spread sail ; and if there is wind of feeling enough to take you out of the channel into the ocean, avail yourself of it. No matter how slight the wind may be, make sail ; and so long as you have enough to carry your vessel, you would not be any better off if there was a gale."

EVIDENCES OF CONVERSION.

And now, as to the evidence which men will develop, and which you are to search for: In the beginning of a man's career in the Christian life, when he first commences to form purposes of reformation, you are to see what knowledge he has in that direction; and it will develop itself in all sorts of ways. You must remember the infirmities of men. For example, one man comes to me, and I ask him what about the Christian scheme, and about the history of Christ, and find that he knows comparatively little about these things. I find that he is determined to be a Christian and wants to join the church. I say to him, "Joining the church is not religion." "I know that," he says; "but I am going to join the church and be a better man." He knows very little about repentance, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; but he has a vague feeling that the church represents the whole Christian life. He is fumbling about and feeling his way in the dark; he is blind; he needs light; and my business is to look on him, as God does, with great tenderness, and lead him along. He has a purpose, and it only needs that he shall have intelligence; and my business is to administer it to him, as he can bear it, little by little. This being done, he will be saved.

It is often asked of a person that is being examined, "How long do you think it has been since you became a Christian?" "About two months." "Do you recollect the particular time when you became a Christian?" "Well, I think it was on such a day." "Do you remember the circumstances under which you were converted?"

"I think it was under such and such circumstances." "Did you have any very deep experiences?" "I cannot say that I did. I felt that I was a sinner, and that I was in need of forgiveness; and I resolved to live a Christian life." "Have you had any great joy since?" "Not as much as I wish I had." "Do you love to read your Bible?" "Sometimes I do." "Sometimes? Do not you like to read it *always*?" "I do not know that I do."

Then the examining committee set to work to make the man insincere. That was a good honest answer. I like those persons who answer against themselves honestly. But the committee are not satisfied. They think it necessary to "search that thing out," as they say; and they put the question again. "Do not you always love to read the word of God?" There is not a man who asks the question that does. You might as well ask me, "Are not you always hungry?" Then they say, "Do you love to pray?" "Yes, sir." "Do you love to be where God's people are?" That is the toughest question of all!

If a poor ignorant man told me that he was a Christian, and wanted to go into the church, I would say, "That is evidence to me." On the other hand, if an intelligent person said that he liked to read the Bible, that he liked to pray, that he liked to be in the church, and so on, I should not consider that as evidence. I should give weight to the testimony of each according to the place which he occupied, and the circumstances by which he was surrounded. In order to judge of a man's piety and of his fitness to go into the church, I want to know his disposition. I want to know whether

he has reconciled himself in regard to that ten years' quarrel with his neighbor. I want to know if he has gone and confessed to that man to whom he told a lie. I want to know whether he has returned with interest the five thousand dollars which he embezzled when he settled that estate, and whether he has made confession to the parties concerned.

I have had to distribute much money which had been unjustly obtained or withheld. Persons on coming into my church have said that they had defrauded men with whom they had had dealings, and have delegated me to carry the money of which they were unjustly possessed to the rightful owners.

I recollect a man who came to me and said, "I was in a certain firm, and we did a commission business; and there were three or four occasions on which I know we received a good deal of money which belonged to our customers. I cannot tell you who my partners were, because it is not for me to inculcate them; but I want you to take so much money (giving me the amount) and pay it out so and so. I have made up my mind to be a Christian; I feel that a Christian must be honest; and I want you to see such and such men and give them this money without any name." It was a very interesting interview that I had with one of the men, because the effect was to break him down and bring him under conviction. It was a gospel to him. I went into his counting-house, and said, "I have a very pleasant duty to perform. There is a man uniting with my church who thinks he is a Christian, who is trying to live a Christian life, and who says he has defrauded you. This is the amount of the principal, and this is the interest."

The man sat and trembled a moment, and then he said, "Who is he? For God's sake, tell me his name." "No, sir," I said, "I cannot tell you his name." The man cried like a child. "Well," said he, "that means something. — Partner, come here." The partner came, and he had to tell it all over to him. This man himself came to my church and began to believe in religion. This instance was so different from anything that he had met with before, that he thought, after all, there must be something in Christianity, although no such impression had been made upon him before that time. For, where men do business and find that deacons cheat them, that leading men in the church cheat them, and that they have to look out as sharp for members of the church as for anybody else (and a little sharper, because, having everything settled up above, they think they can take a little more liberty down here), then it is hard to preach the gospel to them effectively; but when you bring evidence to worldly business men that there is among Christians self-denial, self-sacrifice, and humiliation, not only before God but before men, it is like a gospel to them.

DISPOSITION THE CRITERION.

In judging of a man's character as a Christian, therefore, I inquire, first, "Is your purpose right?" and secondly, "Is your disposition conformable to that purpose?" I hardly ever put the same questions to one man that I do to another.

Every man, therefore, who is typical of a class must be treated according to his disposition. Some men are cold; and if they are Christ's, they will begin

to thaw out, and be genial. Some men are very selfish, proper, and exceedingly excellent; and if they really become Christians, you will see the steams and mists rising which indicate the action of April on the frozen ground. There are some men who are proud and arrogant; and if they have Christ's spirit in them, they will begin to be condescending and gentle.

Now, I do not look for the ground to thaw four feet deep in a second. If it thaws an inch deep in a day, I say, "Very well, let it go on, and keep going on, under the warmth of the sun." And if a man's purpose is right, and he is, in his daily life, fulfilling that purpose, and finding out his duty more and more, I am content, and I say of him, "He is converted."

So much for Repentance, and so much for the doctrine of Conversion.

AFTER-DEVELOPMENT.

There is one more point that I wish to propound (unless that bell means that you must go. You can stay, can you? Very well. You will have me here only twice after to-day, and perhaps you can afford to bear a little more weariness in these last lectures). I want to say, in regard to the after-development of Christian life, that we are too apt, as soon as men are converted, and brought into the fold, to feel, "Now they are all safe, and we will look out for others." We are forever dragging the net, and never scaling and packing down our fish. We are working to save men's souls on the theory that when a man has a very slight moral impression made on him, and he swells the number of our church, we are to take it for granted that his soul

is saved. I do not feel so at all. I feel that we are more responsible for a person when once we have him in the church than we were before. And frequently he is in more danger; because if he is wrong, and he thinks he is right, all those influences which otherwise would naturally tend to condemn him cease to operate on him. Such a man is in great danger in the church; and your work must especially continue with him.

And in regard to the higher life in a church, let me say, that by maintaining the whole membership active, and keeping fresh before their minds that they are following Christ, not in their corporate church capacity, but each one in the field where Christ put him, their development in that higher life will be promoted. A boy is following Christ as a boy, at home, at school, wherever he is, and therefore his experiences and developments must be there, and not somewhere else. A mother who cannot go to meeting, but is at home bearing and nursing children, has her church in that particular workshop. In those special ways in which her duties are to be performed, she is to develop this higher life of consecration to God, through benevolence, and faith, and love, and hope. A mechanic or day-laborer finds his altar in precisely those relations in which, in the providence of God, he is placed. The business man has his temptations and victories, and in those temptations and victories, for the most part, his higher disposition is to be unfolded. We are to make men feel that while the church is the great feeding-ground of the world, the world of business is the drilling-ground where the strength of those who are in the church is to be used. We are to make them feel that

that love is poor and superficial which does not actuate their every-day life; that being a Christian is carrying one's self lovingly in the place where God put his ordinary life, and performing the duties of the higher life with a full beneficence and consecration; that, to be a true worshiper of God, one must carry the spirit of the Sabbath into all the week, and not act as if Sunday were the sacred day, and all the rest of the days unsacred. We are to make them feel that they are to take their religion to their business, and that the sphere of their business is the place where their religion should develop itself.

THE HIGHER LIFE.

Then comes the transcendent experience of Christians. I have spoken somewhat slightly in your presence, I am afraid, of perfectionism. I have known instances in which I did not sufficiently measure my words; and it may be that I have used language which might be construed as throwing contempt upon perfectionists. But far be it from me to speak with contempt, I would rather speak with admiration, of what may more fitly be called the higher forms of the development of Christian experience. There is, I believe, as much a genius for the higher developments of Christianity—that is, for the higher natural developments of the human mind—as there is for developments of any other kind. Some of the higher Christian developments in men are of transcendent beauty, and are not to be cried down, unless those who possess them make them cruel and despotic; but they are not possible to all.

For example, no man who is misadjusted in his original structure, no man the problem of whose life consists in harmonizing his own antagonistic faculties, will be able to develop the quality of serenity in life except to a limited degree; while on the other hand a man whose original structure is well adjusted, and whose faculties are naturally harmonious, will be able to develop that quality to a high degree of perfection.

I once had come to my lecture-room a lady whose business was to preach the higher life; and I think I never saw so sweet and seraphic a face as that of this woman. She stood in the presence of my congregation and talked; and it was like a vision of angels to hear her voice. It did me good all through to witness her serene, simple rejoicing in Jesus Christ, and to observe the intense conviction which she had, that as she was, so everybody could be. She was mistaken in this; but it was a mistake which came from the simplicity and generosity of her heart; and she, under the full power of faith and love in Jesus Christ, rose to an experience as unique as Mozart's musical talent, that was real, but not universal. It was special to her by reason of a foregoing preparation for it in her nature, organization, endowment, and communion with God.

I should rejoice to see a church made up of such persons; but am I to say to my beloved people, "Here is what you must all come to. You can every one of you come to this, and it is your fault and sin if you do not come to it"? I might as well read one of Shakespeare's dramas in a village school, and say to the boys, "Not one of you may think that he is educated until he can write such a drama as that." But how many

men in the history of the world could do that? I might as well examine a boy in Newton's *Principia*, and say, "There is what you are to come to, and you will be sinful if you do not come to it."

These things are not general, but special. Yet it is a great comfort to me, in my struggles with myself, in my attempt to chord my own varying powers, to know that such struggles have resulted in harmony in others. I know that it is real, and I have hope. There was never anything that so nearly killed me as trying to be Jonathan Edwards. I did try hard. Then I tried to be Brainard; then I tried to be James Brainard Taylor; then I tried to be Payson; then I tried to be Henry Martyn; and then I gave up, and succeeded in being nothing but just myself.

Yet every man must feel that he can raise himself higher and higher. Do not allow people to feel that there are no higher attainments than they have reached. Do not allow them to feel that there is no higher rest of soul into which they can ascend.

If any rise to a high degree of perfection, let it be maintained, and maintained, too, with humility, for I have seen persons that claimed to have perfection who were puffed up, and about whom, in their social ways, there was an ineffable odor of, "Don't you wish you were as good as I am?" See that the higher life does not degenerate into anything unworthy; and see, also, that it does not discourage anybody; and that you do not teach your people that their feeling must be just so or it is good for nothing.

All feelings that aim in the right direction are recognized and blessed of God, from the lowest to the

highest. The same sun that moves round and round the world, and shines on the cedars of Lebanon, on the mighty live-oaks of Florida, and on the immense sequoias of California, also shines on the moss and the lichen ; and the love of God broods over all men, from the lowest to the highest.





XI.

CHRISTIAN MANHOOD.

March 18, 1874.

THE AIM OF PAUL'S MINISTRY.

I CANNOT trace in the Apostle Paul's writings the slightest effect of his visit among the Greeks. He does not seem to have seen, or if he saw he does not seem to have felt, or if he felt he felt only glancingly and superficially, the physical and visible beauty which was developed among the Greek people. Whether it was because the stock to which he belonged had no education in the science of beauty (the Jews were not a building people, nor a painting people, nor, in general, a structural people), or whether it was because all their sense of beauty was drawn up into their moral nature, so that what was beauty to them was beauty of character, as it is called, or beauty of holiness, as it is expressed in the Scriptures, cannot be precisely said, although the latter is the view I rather incline to; but, with the exception of some general allusions, there is very little evidence that the Apostle took much from the Greeks. He spoke of their games, of their races, of their strifes, and so on; but there is one figure that

he employs which I shall use by way of introducing this lecture, and which is found in the third chapter of his first letter to the Corinthian church. He speaks of the disciples as being God's building; and he speaks of himself as being the *architect* who had helped build it,—as the master-builder; he declares that he had sketched out the foundation-plan, and that whoever came after him must build according to that plan, which consisted in delineating the qualities of the Lord Jesus Christ. *He* was that foundation-plan or ground-sketch on which men were to build. And what were they to build? A church? No, each individual man was to build a character.

Paul, then, had a definite conception, himself, of what he was about; and he left also to those who should come after him, under his influence, this suggestion: that they were not to work at haphazard. Their business was to create new men on this foundation or ground-plan of Jesus Christ, which he had sketched out. He had an aim.

Every man that goes into the ministry should have an aim, understanding with himself definitely and accurately, as far as may be, what he shall drive at. It is not simply that you shall perform your routine duties abstractly or ecclesiastically: you will do that of course, but it is only a means to an end; or, if it be not, it is machinery, and unworthy of your manhood. It is not enough that you should get together large congregations in destitute places, or that in places where congregations are organized you should perform the regular parochial duties; for these things, too, are merely instrumental. They are measures adopted

with reference to results. There must be something a great deal deeper.

THE PERFECTION OF HUMAN CHARACTER.

On what plan, then, must a man proceed in his ministry?

This brings me back to the last topic which we had under consideration, and which I had not time to discuss except in a very brief and superficial manner. In my last talk with you, I was on the question of Sanctification, or the final form of the Christian character which it is your object to produce, and toward which all your ministry must lead up. Let me say that I look upon this subject as transcending in importance any other which I have brought before you. It is that which God meant when he revealed himself in Christ Jesus. It is that which he has meant in the long course of that providence by which he has sought to shape this inchoate race into symmetry and beauty and divinity. It is, therefore, the object of the Divine scheme; and you, as workers together with God, will find the supreme end of your ministry in this: the perfection of human character according to the design of God, and according to the pattern of that design which is manifested to us in the life and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. I regard this subject as all-important, not simply on account of the life of the individual who is concerned in it,—though that is immeasurably important,—but because I feel that religion in our age is in danger, on the one hand, of becoming a mere enthusiasm,—haply a superstition; and, on the other hand, of becoming a cold and polite natural-

ism ; and because, escaping either of these, it threatens to be theoretic, technic, ecclesiastic, pedantic, — in short, Pharisaic.

So, then, there is, and there must be, a conception of Christian character which shall go deeper ; and with that Christian character before us, it seems to me we shall not only renew the power of the ministry, but meet all those tendencies which exist and are gathering their forces to produce *unreligion*, if not *irreligion*.

You must needs make the Christian man something more real and noble than the outside world have been accustomed to regard him, and with the power of love, with the force that lies in being, with the irresistibility that exists in moral qualities, I would gain victories, and reassert the place of the church and foremost the office of the Christian ministry.

THE TRUE NATURE OF MAN.

For just now we are shaking in the wind ; and the official Archbishop of Canterbury is not, on the whole, to-day regarded by thinking men in England as so noble a type of manhood as Mr. Tyndall or Herbert Spencer. There is a popular feeling setting in, more and more, that we are to look for our best types of character, not in the church and her offices, but in the schools of science and of philosophy ; and though this may not be a new thing, it is a thing whose force is more visible to-day, and whose influence shadows us more, than at any other period of our lives. Men are going back from religion, as something artificial, to nature, as a truer and a safer ground.

Now, what is *Nature*? We use this word carelessly, as signifying the great material world outside of ourselves. When it is applied to man we often signify by it simply his primitive condition. When used in regard to the individual, it signifies that which he is at his birth,—his untaught, untrained self,—his primary status in this world before he has developed anything.

Now, I protest against this use of the word *nature*. Man is not by nature what he is when he begins. In the whole realm of the world outside, that lives in the vegetable kingdom and in the animal kingdom, we do not reason so. We do not consider that to be the nature of a plant which you find when it sprouts. We wait until every seed has brought forth the fullness of what is in it, and that we call its "nature." We look not in the acorn to know the nature of the oak, but in the tree a hundred years grown. We look not in the wild rice of the wilderness to see what the nature of the grain is, but in rice that has been cultivated and perfected. For the nature of cereals we look not at them, small and shriveled where no hand hath reared them; but we look at them where by the skill of man they have been enabled to develop themselves to the uttermost bounds and limits. We do not look at the lion's whelp, blind and sucking its dam, and call that a lion. We wait until it is clothed with power,—then we see the lion and the lion's nature. We do not look at the poor unfledged and callow eaglet, opening its mouth and receiving food from the parent bird, and call that an eagle. It is only when he lifts himself up with power of wing and reach of vision that we call

him the king of birds. His nature is not at its puling beginnings, but the other end.

And why should we take the human race at their seed-end, and call that a man's nature which he is at the outset, when he is raw and undeveloped, instead of calling that his nature which he is when he is ripened and unfolded, and which the mind of God had in view when he created him ?

So, then, man's nature does not lie where he began, but the other way. It is that which he may become. Man's true nature is that which he is when, under right conditions, under proper culture, and under the stimulating influence of the Divine Soul, he has been carried on in development, in harmonization, to perfectness. What a man reaches when he is harmonized with himself and with God, — that is his nature.

OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

I have made these remarks in order to say that religion is natural to man, not artificial; and that our business is to bring men up to their nature. To every scientist, to every philosopher, to every cold, reasoning man who looks at the instruments of the church, at its economy, at its external clothing, as it were, and calls these religion, I say that what *I* mean by religion is that which a man is brought to by Divine guidance, when everything in him is in its normal condition and ultimate strength. And it is to this that you are to bring men. Bringing them to this is the real object of our ministry. We are not to start them, to disquiet them, to get them into the church, and then to neglect them. We are not simply to make them happy, or to make

them do some good: we are to labor to bring them to the stature of the fullness of manhood in Christ Jesus. That is the supreme end of the Christian ministry.

HUMAN NEED OF EDUCATION.

When animals are born, there are but three letters to the alphabet of their faculties, as it were, — A, B, C; but when men are born there are twenty-six or more letters to the alphabet of their faculties. Take a lion, for instance. There can be only six permutations of his three letters; and the lion soon goes through them all, and grows up to his full self, — and he does it without a schoolmaster. But no man grows up to his full self without a schoolmaster. The ages have to wait for men. The beginnings of the human race are unsusceptible to the full development of human character. That is a thing so large and so glorious that it takes not simply the limit of one man's life, but ages of nations to develop it; and it goes on becoming larger and larger in every generation. The world will come to its full power and supreme glory only when the ultimate conditions of human character are reached, which are so complex because man is so rich in his endowments; because there are so many organ-stops in him; because there are so many alphabetic initials, making as many variations in his experience as the letters of our language make words in literature. It is a large and a long work, to bring to perfection that which God meant in man, and which ought to be expressed by the word *nature*. When a man is developed up to his true nature, the reason, every part of it, must be brought to

its full ; the moral sentiments, each one of them, must be brought to their full ; the social faculties must be brought to their full ; every part of the mind must be brought to its full : and each must learn its *rôle*. Consider how many faculties there are which go to constitute the reason ; and consider that each one not only has to learn its own trade, but has to keep good neighborhood with corresponding faculties. Consider how many sentiments there are in a man's moral nature ; and consider that each one of these not only has to learn to perform the functions of its own sphere with full power, but that it also has to co-operate with the others. Consider that every part is to grow strong, and is also to grow concordantly with the rest.

There is this necessity of education, or development by training, in each man's natural state, — not the state in which he is born, but that state *for* which he was born, and towards which he is to come by the gradual birth of fourscore years or more ; and your business, as an educator, is to bring him to that.

LOVE, THE ONLY PRACTICAL SOUL-CENTER.

This view gives an immense leverage. I speak not altogether without experience. I have a congregation which is filled with young scientists. I know their doubts. I am acquainted with their difficulties. I have for years been seeking to find out the way of presenting to them the truth as it is in Christ. I have been endeavoring to preach the gospel to men who have been imbued with the spirit of the modern schools, in such a way that it should meet their moral convictions. I have studied to impress men with the feeling

that religion means that final form of development which consists in the perfect harmonization and strengthening of their powers around about a common center of the soul, under the Divine inspiration. I have sought to lead them to recognize that religion presents a philosophical conception which is not in disagreement with the tendencies of the present day, — which harmonizes with them. It has been my endeavor thus to gain the ear of men who were likely to be alienated from mere sectarian views which embrace philosophical formulas that are antiquated or run out.

This harmonization of all the faculties of the soul can only take place around the true center. There is but one center about which you can harmonize a man's faculties so that the reason will submit to its mastership; so that the moral sentiments will do obeisance to it; so that the social elements will admit that it is sovereign; so that all the appetites and passions will yield allegiance to it; so that every bodily force will willingly submit to its control: and that center is Love.

OTHER FACULTIES TESTED.

For instance, take REASON as a center and attempt to harmonize the whole character about that. In the first place, the reason of man is but, comparatively speaking, a guide. Make it free as you please, and let it be fruitful as may be, searching every whither; but alone it can never become a center around which the powers of a man will all move obediently and harmoniously. And that experience has shown, thousands and tens of

thousands of times. More than that, reason can never interpret to a man that which is his truest manhood. Reason is itself the instrument of all the rest of the mind ; and the man lies under it, behind it, and around it. Just as the ocean lies underneath the ship, so the great motive-power of man, his heart and soul, lies underneath the reason. Reason never can express a feeling. It expresses ideas and their relationships ; but the interpretation of emotion by ideas, the intellectual conception of a feeling, is simply impossible. Still less can the force of feeling be controlled by ideas. If a man undertakes to make himself a Christian by standing on a center of reasonableness, and doing whatever he sees to be right, he must ask leave of his temper. There are thousands of men who know that it is reasonable not to be excited ; but if, as they step out of doors, they meet a man who owes them money, and who says to them, "Get it if you can ; you can't collect a cent," how they fly off from the beautiful center of reason !

It has no control over passion and appetite. You may throw as many icicles into the fire as you please, but icicles won't put out fire. Ice must be liquefied before it can be of any use for such a purpose. And so reason is incapable of extinguishing the elements of evil which exist in men. It may set about controlling the other faculties of the mind ; but the moment its attention is withdrawn from them they are like school-boys that laugh and play when the master is out ; and when it comes back it is quite surprised at the disorder which prevails in the school of the soul. They won't mind it.

A man loves money better than anything else in the world ; he sees how his life is deranged by his avarice, and he tries to persuade himself that it is right to devote himself to its accumulation. He says, "I take a great deal of enjoyment in collecting my rents, and, right or wrong, I am going to have money." The reason protests against this ; but avarice laughs and has its own way, in spite of reason.

A man is told how foolish pride is ; how much misery it brings him ; how much unhappiness it causes other men ; what a stirrer up of trouble, and what a producer of pain, it is. The reason is convinced, and says to pride, "You must humble yourself, Mischief-maker Pride" ; but a sparrow might as well say to Mont Blanc, "Come down and play with me in the valley." It will not come down ; and no more will pride humble itself in obedience to the command of reason.

Take another element around about which character is formed as a controlling power. Next to reason, men center their life on the *Will*. Gentlemen, do you know what the will is ? I know what it is in its concrete form ; but in its philosophy, in its faculty, what is it ? You cannot give a definition of it. We all think that it is a directive force, and that is all. It does not generate feeling nor thought, it simply gives direction to something which existed beforehand. It cannot, therefore, be a center. It controls ; but it only controls elements which have been developed for it to control. Any amount of effort has been put forth to make it a center ; but see with what result. For instance, Professor Finney has made the will the grand center-point

- of departure from selfish life to holy life. A man resolves, "By the grace of God, from this hour I will attempt to live as a Christian, and all my life shall flow in that direction." That is right, instrumentally; but men of strong understanding go on all their life long vainly attempting to build up Christian character on that doctrine. There is a latent doctrine, or an overt one, more or less concerned in it; but their character is formed on the will-power, as it is called; or it is the result of a series of determinations. And what do you make of them? Keen, active, executive, external men; but seldom men sweet, kindly, or full-souled. The crystallizing force is in the wrong place in such natures.

Another class of men attempt to subdue the whole nature around about *Veneration* as a central point; the sense of the magnitude, of the sublimity, of the authority, and of the grandeur of God. To veneration men are taught to attempt to submit everything which they have in them. You cannot make a rich nature in that way. It is not simply having a sense of nobility, and certainly it is not having an awful fear of what is noble, that is going to make one's nature rich.

There are two elements in religion. One is the restrictive element; and that is to be strong in proportion as men are nearly allied to their animal conditions. *Not to do wrong* is the lowest element of piety; but thousands of persons never reach any higher than that. Not to do wrong is their charter; and veneration, though it adds color to a character under certain circumstances, is, as a controlling center, substantially negative. It holds men back, restrains them, outwardly,

from disobedience or neglect ; but restraining evil is the lowest form and type of influence. It is essentially allied to the animal condition.

The fruit of the Spirit is not negative, but positive. It is zeal in love ; it is humility ; it is mind-influence ; it is disinterestedness ; it is activity in doing good. As you rise from the animal toward the higher forms of men, the natures that are developed must be positive, and not negative. A man may have a garden with not a single bit of purslane in it from one end to the other, with not a single Canada thistle in it, with not a pig-weed in it, with not a particle of dock in it, with not one single weed in it ; a man may have a garden without one bad thing in it, — and without a good thing in it either, not a flower nor a fruit.

Now, to get your weeds out of the way is all right ; but the weeds are to be got out in order that the ground may be occupied by positive blossoms and fruit. Not doing wrong is right ; but it is a lower right. It is simply keeping under the weeds, as it were, of the disposition, while the real thing which a man should seek to do should be to produce positive virtues. But veneration does not produce these ; and therefore it is not, when the soul moves in complex ways, fitted to be the master. It cannot drive the soul when its different faculties are all abroad, and are variously engaged. It takes another charioteer.

So neither can you center the character around about *Ideality*, — the artist feeling, — the taste feeling, — the sense of beauty and propriety. At certain stages of civilization men naturally make that pre-eminent ; and, as I have said, it may become a powerful auxiliary to

the spiritual emotions, to a much larger extent than it is ; but as a master-center, as a sovereign in the soul, it is feeble. As a restrainer, as a harmonizer, as a guide and governor, it is power indeed.

And that which is true of beauty is just as true of *Conscience*. We hear a great deal said about conscience ; we hear a great deal said about the lack of conscience ; and I believe that the foundations of character ought to be laid on conscience, just as the parlor and the nursery ought to be laid on oak sills ; but I should as soon think of bringing up my children on planks and timbers in the parlor and nursery, laying their bare limbs down on these hard timbers and planks, as to attempt to make a rich, sweet, lovely, and lustrous character simply on conscience, which is, in its essential nature, cold, hard, condemnatory, and which comes into alliance with the malign passions much more naturally than with the benign elements. Its true chemical affinities are with the bottom, and not often with the top. At any rate, they have, by practice and habit, been made to ally themselves very much with the lower qualities of the mind. The soul will not own conscience as its master.

Neither will *Fear* nor *Superstition* do to be made the center about which to harmonize all the faculties of a man's soul. There is but one real center.

THE PAULINE CONCEPTION.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels [though I speak Syriac, and Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, yes, and the language of angels, — I think I see that in the text], and have not love, I am as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

If he had lived in our day, he would have said a bass-drum, which is very empty and very noisy.

“And though I have the gift of prophecy [aptitude of speech as well as foresight and disclosure], and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing; and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor [though I am unboundedly generous, — generosity being the sensibility of kindness when the object of suffering is visible to our senses; and liberality being the sense of kindness when the object of suffering is invisible; one having the elements of faith in it, and the other one sensuous elements], and though I give my body to be burned [in my zeal and fierce addiction to my own views of the truth], and have not love, I am nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth.”

What a fruit-tree it is that bears all this fruit! What is the soul, that it can bring forth such things as are enumerated here? We are coming to the center according to the Pauline conception, which has love in it as the essential element. And see, when he comes to that how regnant he makes it! See how it has in it the prolificness of the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent God! It “never faileth.” It has in it immortality. Everything else is relative to it.

“But whether there be prophecies, they [belonging to this particular sphere, — belonging to time and circumstance] shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease [all

languages end with this world]; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. [All knowledge here is relative, suggestive, fugitive, and will perish. When you rise to see what is in the universal realm, all that you see here will seem like fleeting clouds and films.]

“For we know in part [this was said by a man who had been in the seventh heaven], and we prophesy in part. [Now Paul never would do for a theologian, acknowledging, as he did, that he knew only in fragments.] But when that which is perfect is come [when the full disclosure of men’s manhood is made; when men have been educated on the earth, and have passed through the drill of life, and have gone through the battle, and won, and have ripened the Spirit of God in themselves, and have been lifted up out of limitations and hindrances], then that which is in part shall be done away.”

Well, Paul, what then about that other state? If all that is so glorious and grand in this life is as nothing; if you say of that state, “Ah! I do not know any more about that than I knew about manhood when I was a child”; if you say, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things,” and that is your representation of our present condition as compared with our future condition, then what must that other state be?

Now, we are children; and the inspired Pauline idea of heaven is, that our conception of it is as far from the glory of the reality, as the visions of a child are from the experience of his full manhood. He says, “Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then, face to face: now I know in part [I, the chiefest of the apostles, know but in spots and fragments]; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

Very well, then, what part of us will remain? If you say that the understanding, the imagination, and all the thousand susceptibilities and sympathies of the soul are of the earth, earthy, shall we have our identity in the other sphere? Shall we know ourselves and other men? Yes; for there are certain qualities that constitute the great conditions of our personality which never perish, which do not change, which abide forever.

“Now abideth faith, hope, love.”

Faith is that quality of a man's nature by which he comes into the realm of the invisible. Hope is that power by which his life goes forward beyond the present sphere, and is ever multiplying itself. And Love is greater than either of these.

WHY PAUL WAS RIGHT.

Now, look at such an interpretation, at such a character of Christian character as that, and tell me if I am not warranted in saying that the only faculty of the soul which can be made the center of a man's character, and about which you can rank and harmonize all his other faculties, is the faculty of love. Look at it. What part of a man is it that refuses to submit to love where it exists?

The reason not only submits to it, but takes wider flights and clearer sights when it is in subordination to love. In many relations the reason cannot act except under the influence of the spirit of love.

Let reason undertake to judge hatred, and how imperfect is its judgment! Let reason attempt to adjudicate in the matter of pride, and how blinded is its

vision, how awry are its conclusions, how warped and partisan are its methods and influences !

Now, bring love into the soul, with its quietude, with its sweetness, with its harmonizing nature, and how does reason, like one coming out of a dream or a fit of insanity, see things as they are ; and how does it move majestically as if it were a very creature of God !

Bring in veneration as a center, and how many powers of the soul are in insurrection ! Then bring in love, and how everything in the soul is regulated and brought into a state of willing allegiance !

There is nothing in the constitution of man to which selfishness yields as it does to love. I do not know of anything that is more prettily selfish than a petted girl. She is the delight of father and mother. She is beautiful. She is accomplished. She is universally attractive. She is beloved by all who know her ; and in a thousand little pretty ways she manifests her selfishness ; and everybody tolerates it ; and all the neighbors say, "She is utterly spoiled." But ere long, in the hour of disclosure, she finds her mate ; she loves, and at once all her faults and failings begin, one after another, to dissolve, and go away, like snow in March. And, by and by, love watches the cradle. And this creature, that father had to serve, and mother had to serve, and the servants had to serve, and everybody had to serve, and toward whom ran in every stream of delight, being now a mother, cares nothing for parties and visits, — cares only to serve that little unrequiting child. And all night she will give up her sleep that she may watch over it if it be sick, and all day she will devote herself to it. And she is joyous

as a bird as she sits and sings to her darling in the cradle. And that which wrought so marvelous a change in her was love.

Now, there is nothing but the elemental power of love that can subdue all the other human faculties and make them revolve about it. And is not that the quality, in Jesus Christ, that Paul thought of when he said that there was no other controlling power, no other master-builder, no other architect, no other ground-plan, of the soul, like that which was in Christ Jesus, who came to show how he had loved the world? The charter of his coming was this: *God so loved the world that he gave his Son to suffer and die for it.* Love, that suffers; that bears all things; that strengthens weakness; that enlightens darkness; that restrains impetuosity; that humbles pride; that sweetens bitterness, yea, and acerbity; that takes from men all things rude, and gives them all things refined; that God sent into the world in the person of Jesus Christ, walking in beauty and authority and power,—Love said to all mankind, “Lay aside ceremonial sacrifices, and ordinances, and rules, and regulations, and conform your lives to this living pattern. Here is godhood, and therefore here is manhood. They are one and the same. So, build accordingly.” And then what? Because you are of God, and because like attracts like, you will come irresistibly into the Divine communion and into the Divine presence.

THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Now, in your ministration you are men-builders, not in a general sense alone, but in the sense of the eternal

structure of character. And here I want to say that if any man thinks this kind of character can be built without Divine influence, I pity his ignorance. There are a great many men who say that they have all the power they want, and that they do not depend on God; but they are men who have not an idea of inward character, and of the necessity of reconstruction. I know what is in man; I have seen it, I have felt it, I have wrestled with it; and if one thing lies deeper in my thought and conviction than any other, it is this: that without the direct influx, the immediate and efficacious agency, of the Divine Spirit, it is in vain to attempt to reconstruct the character of a man, and bring out in him that manhood which is the true nature of mankind. You say, "No, the family helps, and the laws help"; but do you not know that the well-ordered family is the reflex influence of the Divine mind, and that just and wise laws in society have stored up in them the influence that has come from the down-shining of God upon men from generation to generation?

There is nothing more beautiful in Tyndall's writings than where he shows that all forces that are working in the world are solar forces. According to his theory, it is the sun that has given life to the vast trees and plants on the face of the earth. When, by heat from wood or coal, water is converted into steam, the force is a development of that which was stored up in the fuel, and which has come to itself in another form; and thus it is still the sun that does the work. So institutions store up Divine influences through years; and when they act they are indirect and secondary forms of Divine influence.

But the direct influence of the sun,—see how it works everywhere! Did you ever notice a tree growing against a wall? How gently it grows in the sunlight, that is so charming, so bland, so sweet! The birds, as with glittering wings they fly through the air, rejoice in the sunlight. The maiden walks forth from her sick-chamber, and thanks God for the sunlight. All the globe above our heads is a vast goblet, as it were, filled with the wine of sunlight. What is so harmless and sweet and beautiful as the sunlight? And yet, let the sunlight go on working on the willow,—the most accommodating of trees, that waves whichever way it is coaxed to wave,—and let the tree crowd against almost any wall, and it will push it down, whether it be of brick or stone. The simple influence of the sun in things that have life in them,—how mighty it is!

Soul-growth comes from the influence of the Divine sun, as really as vegetable growth comes from the influence of the visible sun. The growth of the soul comes by the shining of the Sun of Righteousness, in whose beams there is life and health and power to every soul that accepts it.

Here, then, we come to a ground which it seems to me is common, or may be common, both to those who are engaged in church work and those who are engaged in scientific work.

There is no doctrine in which men believe more at this day than in evolution,—development, going on and up, greater and greater unfolding. And men talk of going from nature toward civilization. But I say that civilization *is* nature,—the highest nature. I say

that the gospel of Christ is seeking the same thing which, however dimly and however blindly, science is making its way toward, — the disclosure of the power of God by which men grow ; and it is coming to be understood that they grow by the very forces which are in them, harmonized around that soul-center love, which, when man is in his normal condition, controls everything that is in him.

THE PERFECT MAN.

This, then, is my estimate of sanctification. It is that state into which men come when every part of their nature has been developed, and when the faculties have been subordinated in their real gradations. When the faculties have all come to have affinities with the central controlling elements of Divine and human love in the soul ; when that love is the center from which power goes out and stimulates every faculty, — then men are perfect.

When I look at "perfect" folks, my first thought is, always, "Are they more loving and more lovely than other folks?" I have seen many perfect people, or people that called themselves perfect, and have often wished that I felt as happy about being perfect as they did ; but when I apply my test I cannot find perfect folks. There are those who think they are perfect because they do not commit faults, — that is, because they do not spill over. One reason why they do not spill over is because there is so little in them. Some people do not commit many faults, because there is not much to them. They consider themselves perfect, because they think their will is continually coincident

with the Divine will. They walk in that pleasant illusion. It is a dream. I have had such dreams,—though not when I was awake. I have had splendid times when I was asleep, and have waked up to find I had been dreaming. There are men who think their will is in accord with God's will, and who say, "Thy will be done," all the time, whispering it to themselves as they go around. They have had a comparatively quiet and pleasant life, and they think that they agree with God. I do, too, when he agrees with me. When things are about as I want them, I am always content that the will of God should be done; but when they are ordered the other way, then how is it?

Now, there are very few persons who have attained perfection, although there are many who suppose themselves to be perfect. Some persons are perfect in the same way that a man is obedient to his master who is prevented from running away from slavery by the cutting off of his legs. He will not run away, to be sure: but he is rendered less a man by the loss of his legs. A man may be prevented from stealing by cutting his hands off; but he is not so much a man after his hands are cut off as he was before. And this ascetic method of attempting to make men perfect by the mutilation of their faculties, is one which takes away much of their manhood.

My conception of a perfect man is one who is strong; who is full of energy; full of appetites and passions, and, therefore, of that wonderful force which is wrought by them, or which transforms itself into auxiliary forces; full of life; full of thought-power; full of æsthetic excellences; and, above all, full of that cen-

tral element of love to which all other influences are subordinated, and which is itself subordinate to God.

Now, give me a man like this. Where do you find him, — the man of liberty; the man of infinite largeness; the man that goes freely whither he will, up and down, all the faculties playing in harmony with the concert-pitch of the universe, which is love? Show me that perfect man. I have never seen him. I do not expect to see him on earth. It is my business to lead people toward that ideal; but it will remain an ideal in my day. None the less should we seek it, however. None the less should our ministry point to it. We are to preach to our people sanctification, — the arranging and harmonizing of all the faculties of the mind around about love, the sacred principle of the Divine nature; the all-governing principle of heaven; the principle that yet is to transmute men from the animal condition to the angelic, and make them fit companions of God.

THE PREACHER'S MISSION.

If this be the nature of your ministry, young gentlemen, you must be industrious. It will not do for you to spend your time with books alone. You must know *men*, in this day. It is not a small thing to be a minister of Christ. To be a mere priest is a very little thing. In the priestly office there is an appointed round of duties which can be easily performed. But to be a servant of souls; to be Christ's educator of men's interior nature; to stand in the place of the Lord Jesus, not in his majesty of power, but in his spirit, and to attempt to do in your sphere what Christ

by his example taught you to do; to know men; to understand their weaknesses; to perceive their sins, and to sympathize with them and sorrow for them on account of their infirmities, and bring the truth so to bear on them as to fill them up, each in the particular spot where he is deficient, and give proportion and harmony to every part; to preach so that sanctification shall be the end of your ministration,—this requires an industry, a perseverance, a faith, a self-denial, and an intensity of love, which is demanded by no other profession. If one is a servant of men for Christ's sake and for man's sake, there is nothing that he can aspire to which is so noble as the work which he has chosen. It is the highest calling to which a man can devote himself. And when you return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon your heads; when out of the heavenly gate come the multitudes whom your ministry has served, to welcome you,—in that hour it shall be revealed to you that he who serves the eternities by serving the souls of men and women, is greater than he who builds temples, or paints pictures, or governs empires, or secures to himself all the sweet and desirable things of earth.

Our high mission, our noble calling, is to build up souls, to perfect the Christian life, and to make manhood acceptable to God, and radiant in the sight of all men.



XII.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

March 19, 1874.

PAUL, in arguing the supremacy of moral forces over physical, in one place speaks of God as having chosen the "things that are not to bring to naught the things that are," — by which we understand that he has chosen the forces that are above our natural senses. Supersensuous truths, truths of the other life, the invisible truths of man's spirituality, — these are stronger than the embattled forces of matter, whether in the household, or in society, or in the church. The subtle secret spring of highest power lies in the direction of those truths which can have no exposition in language or in form, but which dwell in the innermost consciousness or experience of men.

I purpose, this afternoon, to speak of the power which lies in the invisible, in respect to the truths of the future and man's relation to the future life; and of the uses which are to be made in your ministry of the great truth of continuous existence in the future spiritual, invisible state.

IMMORTALITY IN THE BIBLE.

Every one who reflects for a moment will be struck with the fact that this is a truth which never made its appearance in the Old Testament. It would be wrong to say that the doctrine of immortality was not understood by the old Jews. We can scarcely conceive of experiences such as David and other saints of old had in respect to Jehovah, of enthusiasm, love, and soul-prostration in connection with the idea of divinity, infinite and eternal, that did not carry with them morally, and in some way also inferentially, the doctrine of continued existence on the part of God's people; but in the Old Testament, so far as I know, never, in a single instance, is it more than hinted at, or even then used other than simply as a record of soul-experience. Not once is it there spoken of as a dynamical force; not once as a force in the realm of emotion. It does not clearly appear in the Old Testament in any way. It comes out in the later experiences of the Psalmist and the prophets; but nowhere as a cogent motive and persuasion to good, nor a dissuasion from evil. I do not remember a single instance in which continued existence is there made use of as a motive. Still less do I know of an instance in the Old Testament where the future penalties of ill-desert and misconduct, and the rewards of right conduct, are distinctly employed as an argument in favor of right living.

This is a fact that bears in a great many different directions which I shall not at all pursue.

When we turn to the New Testament, precisely the

antithesis is seen. It is steeped in the doctrine of continuous existence. The great after-life overhangs the New Testament as the heavens overhang the earth; and as the light which brings color down upon everything on the earth is derived from the overbrooding heavens, so in the New Testament, colors, proportions, and I had almost said moral qualities, are the result of this great truth of the continued existence of immortality, brought to life and light by Jesus Christ.

EFFECT OF IMMORTALITY ON THE MIND.

The importance of this truth I cannot overstate. I cannot overstate the importance of it to your ministry. I wish, in the first place, to discuss very briefly several relations of this truth to the different parts of the mind; then to sketch the Scriptural or structural method of presenting the future life; and then to consider, still more briefly, how you shall use this truth.

THE REASON.

I can hardly conceive of the reason as it existed or exists unleavened by the peculiar element of belief in continuous existence. There is a quality, there are ranges and habitudes, given by this faith, which the reason could not have had in any other way, even where it is exercised in relation to questions which are artificial, but which are discussed in the light of eternity and infinity. Even in those practices which obtained, faultily, I think, in times gone by, among the schoolmen (who were refined, and who discussed things as they related to the moral government of God, not in time, nor as to ethics, but as they stood associated with the

eternity of the past and the eternity of the future), this belief was the source of that strength which comes by projecting men's minds in such directions for long-continued periods. They gave a certain sort of richness, and a certain power of holding on, to the understanding. They gave to it also a certain subtleness and refinement which, I think, it can never have by any discussion of matter, nor by any consideration of the relations of men in this sphere. There is something in the idea of extension, whether it be of space or of time, which educates the reason, and gives it a breadth and quality which could be given by no other means.

THE IMAGINATION.

Consider the relations of immortality to the imagination. It may almost be said that a belief in immortality depends upon the existence of the imagination. Certainly it is by the imagination principally that we understand, not only that the worlds were made, but that they are to be unmade and made again. Whatever conception we have, of what the new heaven and the new earth are to be, comes through the imagination.

Faith is only a modification of the imagination. Whoever wrote the Hebrews defined faith to be "the evidence of things not seen."

A moral imagination takes into view the great invisible or unseen world; and here it is that the imagination becomes real, fruitful, strong, allying itself with memory and with present experiences for added material; and with discrimination and the power of hope for projection into the future.

The imagination in dealing with the great moral realm becomes an immense power; and it is to be noticed, in the structure of the Scriptures, that there is a great deal more instruction conveyed to the reason through the imagination than is conveyed to the imagination through the reason. In the infantile condition of every family the imagination deals in fictions, — fictions that are resemblances; and it oftentimes is the case, under such circumstances, that falsity is nearer the truth than fact. It is not unfrequently true that fiction is nearer to reality than reality is to itself, — that is to say, in the impression which is produced on the minds of men. If you were to make to a child a complex philosophical statement of an abstract problem of political economy, it would not be true to him; some phantasmagoric conception would be framed in his mind: whereas, if you were to make a picture for him, or tell him a fable which had not a word of truth in it, it might convey the idea to his mind better than the thing itself would.

So it is true that the imagination oftentimes has this power, as a formative influence; as a precursor of the reason; as a genius that nurses it and ministers to it.

The imagination offers one of the most instructive sides of the mind. It is one of the sides through which knowledge can best come to men; and it is employed throughout the Scriptures, eminently, as a vehicle for imparting knowledge. All the instruction which we get of higher spheres, of higher beings, and of our continued existence comes through this faculty.

THE CONSCIENCE.

The conception of the future and invisible life, and of progress in that life, materially affects also the conscience, making it strong and acute. But that is not all. Ethics whets the conscience, and practice drills it; but the sense of right and wrong is something larger than mere conventions and rules make it, and something larger than society makes it. It is in reality a part of the essential constitution of things, not being localized nor secularized, but having infinite scope.

Conscience has in it, and in its relations, something of sublimity, as well as of terror. There is such a thing as sublimity of joy and sublimity of fear; and it stands related to the elements of necessity, which, beginning and developing imperfectly here, go on in volume and momentum and power forever and forever. A large conscience has in it a juridical power which gives it breadth and potency. A small conscience, a nibbling, pinching conscience, is like a petty justice of the peace who thinks of his own dignity, and who is but a pygmy compared with a great statesman, or a high-minded king, or a judge built on the true pattern. The larger you can make your conscience, the broader, the grander, the more far-reaching, will be the character which will proceed from it. And, whatever its conventional training may be, if it grows up under the light of a coming eternity, it will take on noble proportions.

THE AFFECTIONS.

The same is true of the affections, on which a sense of continuous existence in the invisible realm has the same effect that the sunlight has on flowers, when it makes them blossom. It is easy to begin loving; but how hard it is to keep on! It is easy to begin, on our generous side, and see persons in ideal lights. Is there anything more beautiful in conduct than she who has entranced us? How admirable is the movement of her judgment and mind, as we stand adoring her! Every motion is grace, and every word is music. So it goes on, during all the period in which we worship. So long as we adore an object, that object is beautiful and bright to us. But by and by there comes a junction by which the two are made one; and they act together on a lower plane, where they are tempted to a thousand failings and errors of life, and where they are often overcome by temptation; and gradually there comes a sense of imperfection, of limitation in judgment, and of mistakes committed. Innumerable little trivialities occur. They begin to see things differently. The question arises as to who shall be the trunk and who shall twine. All these things, and many more, come in to mar the picture which had been formed. Its bright colors are tarnished. The vision is lowered from that land out of which we thought nothing could be lowered, — the land of imagination and romance, — into the realm of actuality. And then, O, what alternations of long and weary wastes of common experience, with occasional refreshments! What sad and foggy days of indifference! How poor, oftentimes, is wedded

life, or life in conjunctions of friendship, because there is not one in ten thousand that is made good enough to keep present to the reason and the moral sense the aspects of aspiration of the higher nature.

Young gentlemen, if you want to love, love must be a thing that is immortal. It must be projected in the imagination far beyond the sphere of the body and the realm of time. You must learn to see the things which you love in their higher life, in their coming glory; and whatever repairs of love are made must needs be made by heavenly mechanics. If one could only train himself evermore to lift up against the background of immortality the things that are dear to him and that he would hold dear forever, and see them as they are to be, and imagine them as they shall be when God has passed the final finishing hand over them, how grand and glorious would affection become!

We do not bathe our hearts enough in the other life. We do not often enough send our friends, in imagination, into the ethereal heights where we shall see them, above the vulgar elements of secular life, in the altitudes and beatitudes of a growing and eternal love.

THIS WORLD, IN THE LIGHT OF IMMORTALITY.

Heaven is necessary to earth; and so a conception of continuous existence in the life to come is, by parity of reasoning, necessary to a right consideration of men on earth. It is almost impossible for men to project themselves very far in this world without finding that they are, on that account, losing the sympathy of men around about them. Elective affinities, therefore, take

the place of brotherhood. So men with the imagination and the reason highly cultivated look, if not with contempt, yet with coldness, on the lower rank of men who have no intellectual development, or no ideas in common with theirs, by which they can come into genial and intimate fellowship with them.

You will see in society that men tend to classify themselves all the while. Men of genius are strongly drawn toward men of genius. Men of common pursuits are powerfully drawn together. The community is perpetually stratifying itself. And there is no harm in this, provided the upper classes are perpetually a drawing-up force to the lower. It is because there is selfishness in this that there is harm in it.

There must be some way, therefore, in which men can make up for the deficiencies which exist in those about them, if they would feel a vivid, keen sense of interest in them. But when I think that men are to be hereafter not what they are here; when I think of the poor ignorant men who are inordinately developed in this faculty, and undeveloped in that; when I think of men who are overwrought in some directions, and underwrought in others; when I see men suppressed and kept down by their circumstances and by the tyranny of their fellow-men, I have to find hope for them in the future. When I see those creatures that seem to dodge between the animal and the man, so that we almost doubt where to rank them, I cannot look at them as they are, — certainly when I have conscious sensitiveness to purity, and refinement, and love, and beauty, and dignity, and amplitude of manhood, — and have a feeling of brotherhood toward them. It is

only when I say, looking at them by the help of imagination, "O, these are but the seeds, and these creatures shall yet be lifted up, and opened, and carried forward, and developed in the other life! I stand not before the flower, but before the seed or the bulb,"—it is only then that I can look with complacency upon them.

What homelier things are there than gladiolus roots? But when, in the autumn or spring, I plant them in beds, I never look at them except with pleasure, because I think of those spikes which I shall ere long see covered with blossoms. I have seen them, and I therefore have faith that I shall see them again.

So I look upon the homeliest of human roots and bulbs, and descry in their future condition glorious attributes. The habit of associating them, not with the baseness of their present state, not with their material life, not with their secular experience, but with the invisible, with the power of the world to come, with the glory of God, resting upon their elevated natures,—this enables me, when I look upon them, to gain a conception of something that dignifies and beautifies even the present. I do not know how we can be Christian democrats unless we estimate men by what they are to be, and not by what they are. I cannot kiss unwashed folks, who are repulsive to me both in body and mind, except when I see the invisible that is in them and the future life to which they are coming. When I can see through the opaque that covers them, then I have that which destroys the disagreeableness of this mortal state.

A mother, hesitating, knows not why she is so drawn to that wretched, tottering, unshapen, disfigured crea-

ture; and in a moment she rushes to him. It is her son that now she sees, and not his hideous outward garb, but the inwardness of her old remembered love for him.

There is a power of love in the human soul that can extend itself to all ranks and conditions, and can see them as God sees them, — as they are to be, and not as they are; and the fellowship which is necessary among mankind demands this. If you sweep out of life the doctrine of after-existence by bringing in the doctrine of annihilation, or the cold philosophical declaration that there is no evidence of man's continuance beyond the grave, which is to us substantially the doctrine of man's non-existence in a world to come, — if you do this you might as well spread sackcloth over the heavens and expect agriculture and horticulture to go on in the earth, as to expect under such circumstances to have life go on with its amenities, sweetnesses, and inspirations.

The whole conception of manhood, as it has existed since the prevalence of Christianity; the conception of the best parts of our nature; the conception of the subtlest elements of admiration, and reverence, and trust in men, — that conception is founded not simply on what a man is, but on what he is to be.

We have to take men as we eat fish. We cannot eat fish as they are when they are caught. They must be scaled, the head must be taken off, the fins must be removed, the tail must be cut off, the bones must be taken out; and what is left is all that is really good.

We have to take a man with allowances here and

there: and when you conceive of a man with all his faults taken away; when you sit with a critical and cynical eye, and analyze him, saying, "So much good for reason, so much for moral sense, so much for the affections, so much for comely appearance, and so much for graceful manners, the rest is good for nothing";—when thus you take off a man's scales and fins, and everything external, there is not a great deal left of him,—only just a mouthful.

But when you begin the other process,—that of synthesis; when you take the faulty faculty, and build it up without blemish, without spot, without wrinkle; when you take the imagination and eclaireize it, and give it horizon; when you take the moral sense, and give it health and tone and power; when you look at men, and habituate yourself to look at them in their heavenly aspects, and think what they are to be in the far future,—you will find that it will draw you nearer to them. It will make friendship dearer and more sacred to you. It will make the human race seem more to you than mere aphides or vermin, groping upon the face of the earth. But otherwise they seem very insignificant.

Why, to-day, the whole continent of Africa would hardly make one single full-grown man, with qualities such as those which enter into manhood with us. O, how mean and cheap a man is, judged of by what he appears to be in many parts of this world! A million men might be slaughtered in China to-day, and the world would not lose an idea or a function. As the sheep of the field, perishing, leave nothing to be missed, so there are nations that are of such little

worth that if they were annihilated the world would miss nothing.

I cannot bear to think that the old world is carrying such a worthless burden; and I gain relief from the anguish of the thought by turning to the life and example and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. He gives us assurance that the future of mankind will be different from their present condition. In the light of the New Testament men mount up; they bud; they blossom; they bear fruit; and why should we not give them the advantage of the disclosures which have been made, through the Saviour, of their state in the world to come? Why should we not couple ourselves with our race, not by cold scientific notions of fact, but by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, by the revelation of Scripture, and by that blessed power by which faith — the evidence of things not seen — acts.

THE BIBLE VIEW OF THE FUTURE.

The other life is presented to us in Scripture both in light and in shadow. It has its dark side and it has its bright side. The New Testament, however, uses the bright side in immense disproportion to the dark, — as it should. The other life is a sphere in which men reap what they sow in this. If they sow to the flesh they reap corruption. The world to come is a land where the natural results of wrong-doing work themselves out.

This view of the future inspires fear and sadness. Fear always works toward repression. It has no aspiration in it. Its tendency is to drag one downward toward the flesh. But it is indispensable in the early

periods of national existence or human life. It cannot be dispensed with in the lower stages of the development of mankind. And as every man, in his personal experience, passes through what is equivalent to the savage condition of the race itself; as every child is at first a beast, an animal merely, and rises up through all the stages of unfolding into its own little round, as the race has already done in its larger round; so there is a necessity that there should be a certain amount of fear to hold men back, to restrain them, and to teach them to adapt means to ends. We are not, therefore, to omit or to shrink from such delineations of the dark side of continuous existence in the world to come, as shall excite in men necessary fear. But, after all, while our Master, more than any other writer or teacher of the New Testament, dealt with the sterner features of continued existence, the characteristic element of his instruction is hope, as a power of salvation. It is the conception of a continued life of joy, it is the vision of future blessedness, that gives to the New Testament its peculiar and distinctive color.

ADMINISTRATION OF HOPE AND FEAR.

What proportion of fear or of hope you are to employ in your preaching you cannot determine by any mathematical rule. If I were to ask a physician, "What proportion of diluents or of astringents ought one to employ in his medical practice?" he would laugh at me, and say, "That depends upon the organization of the patient, and upon what his disease is." You cannot say that a physician ought to use diluents twice where he uses astringents once; or that he ought

to use astringents five times where he uses diluents twice. The amount of each to be used will vary continuously according to circumstances. And the idea of attempting to preach doctrines in given proportions, judged of by exact relations, saying, "This, being the great central view, must be preached just so much; and that is a collateral view, and must be preached so much," — the idea of preaching thus according to an imaginary scheme is absurd, preposterous. You are to preach at one time one view, and at another time another view, according to their relations to what you have to do upon the human mind.

How often shall I prune my vines? That depends upon how many vines I have, upon their particular kind, upon what soil they are in, upon whether they grow rampantly or not, and upon what they need. Frequently we prune vines by pinching them in, instead of using the knife, to make them grow right.

And so it is in regard to the great truths of hope and fear. We are to administer them with reference to the mind-qualities with which we have to deal, and with reference to the state or condition of those mind-qualities, in each particular parish; and respecting these things every man of you must judge for himself.

PICTURES OF HEAVEN.

The Scriptural revelation of the life that is to come is pictorial, and not literal. That there are elements in it which will be found to have been true of our earthly experience there can be no doubt; still, the structural method of the New Testament in revealing our future life is one which addresses itself to us through

our imagination, through our reason, through our affections, and through our sentiments. It is a sublime auroral fresco. Of course, the best things, both negative and positive, were taken to reveal the heavenly land. The things which men on earth feel to be the greatest grievances, — the lash, the dungeon, the sword, disease, poverty, over-matched toil, unendurable weakness, fatigue, disappointments, sorrows, the wrenching off of branches, the flowing of tears in grief, deeply wounded affections, — these things one who lives long learns to recognize. They are peculiarities belonging to this lower sphere. They are the negatives by which heaven is described as a place where men never tire; where there is no night; where no tears are shed; where sickness does not come; where nothing molests or makes afraid. If fear were taken away from the myriads of earth, what a translation it would be! A land without fear, — what a land that must be! Such negatives are very significant.

But the positives are also very significant. Things in their best estate are used to represent heaven. The noblest affections, carried up to the point of effluence or ecstasy, are employed for this purpose; and although a singing man might imagine that heaven was a magnificent class of singers standing about the throne and singing the best hymns out of the best collections, yet if you look at in its larger and better aspects, heaven is that state in which the human affections are carried up to their highest condition, and where they act with spontaneity and force, forever pouring themselves out in ecstasy. This is the larger meaning of praise and worship, — the overflow of vital souls in a

land without fatigue, under the inspiration of the Divine presence, where they can bear perpetual rapture, as they cannot bear it in the physical body.

We are to use the Bible just as it is, in so far as it does us any good. I confess that when it talks to me about kings with crowns on their heads, I wink and go on. I do not care about kings. That figure is without force in democratic communities. If *king* means anything to you, it is because you place an artificial importance upon it. It is because you have poured cologne-water on it, which has a fragrance that does not belong to the word itself. Once, kings fascinated the imagination of the world; and to say to the Jews that they were to be kings and priests to God was to set their imaginations on fire; but to tell me that I shall ever be a priest in heaven brings no light and no joy to my mind. It makes the future very stiff and very disagreeable to my conception.

It is not until, catching the *structural genius* of the New Testament,—its mode of representation,—we take the best things which have been revealed to men, the noblest traits which Christianity has brought out, the most royal experiences which have been known to human nature, and put them together and call them heaven, that we shall come to a conception of the future which shall be satisfying to our souls. And we have a right to make our heaven thus, so that it shall shine with radiance, and come to us with a sense of personality: so God permits us to make our heaven for ourselves. Our heaven is a picture which we paint by our imagination, and into which we put what is most precious in this world, all the while remembering

that it is but a faint representation of the heaven to which we are going.

INDIVIDUAL CONCEPTIONS OF HEAVEN.

One impression of heaven is that it is a good place to escape to, out of hell; and in that sense it is a kind of insurance office where a man gets his policy with which he hopes to get through this world safely.

But as you go on, it becomes a matter of sentiment, and persons begin to transfer those things which are most precious to them here — the heart's undying treasures — to that vital heaven which every man must make for himself. By and by, when persons sink under the burdens of life, and their powers begin to fail, and God's love takes on the form of discipline, and the yoke galls their neck, they begin to feel their scholarship; they begin to realize that they are the disciples of the Sufferer; that through suffering they are to attain glory and immortality. Suffering begins to interpret to them the heavenly kingdom.

O, what a dry and arid place it has been to many and many a one until God struck the soul through father, through mother, through some brother or some sister! Then heaven grew populous to them, as it grows populous to you, as you send there one and another that you have loved.

O, how many times have men — great, strong, stalwart men — come to the gate, and found it fastened by a stone which they could not roll away themselves, and which nobody could roll away for them, until a little child from out of the cradle, with its feeble hands was strong enough to roll it away, and open the

gate, and let them look into heaven! How many men have looked in to find their children, and beheld for the first time the light and glory of the other life!

Christian friends, I, who have sent five dear ones there, have come to realize the truth of the words, "A child shall lead them." My departed children have led me to them.

And so we build heaven out of our joys, out of our sufferings, out of our griefs, out of our experiences, taking the best and noblest things, and arranging them so that they shall fill the imagination, and by the imagination warm the heart, and by the heart illumine the understanding. Thus we construct our heaven to suit our personality, always bearing in mind that what we imagine is but the seed-form of what the reality shall be. We know that our conceptions of heaven come short of what it actually is. We know that it shall be better than we imagine it to be. We know that love shall be grander, that joy shall be more wondrous, and that worship shall be more transcendent, than anything that we think of. It is true, as the Apostle said, to whom these things had been revealed, that eye hath not seen, that ear hath not heard, and that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath reserved for those that love him. To stand in the presence of God, to love God as I love my friends, to be as familiar with him as I am with them, and to talk with him, — these are things which cannot be comprehended by us in this world.

I walk with men of science, and am associated with them; but is not God the greatest Scientist? I listen

to men of transcendent eloquence; but is not he the greatest Speaker? I behold with delight the works of superior artists; but is not he the primal Artist, and the grandest? Who is there among his infinite creatures than whom he does not stand infinitely larger in power and wisdom and glory? And I am his; he is mine; and there shall be a familiarity in my intercourse with him which you cannot take away from love. Such is my heaven.

A CONTINUOUS SENSE OF THE INFINITE.

Now, in your ministration you should deal largely with this great realm of the invisible, of the infinite, of the illimitable, and of the absolute. These are the elements which a man needs to take him farthest away from the limitations and narrowness to which he is subject by reason of his animal nature. You are born animals with an undeveloped spirit; and what you need in all your life is that which shall carry up the higher part of your nature, and make it more and more floriferous, more and more beautiful. This is done by opening the whole upper air and realm to your interior being. And as it is with you, so it must be with your people.

While, then, you preach topically on the subject of heaven or of hell; while you preach formal and stated sermons in respect to the great hereafter, — the great above-all and around-all and under-all, — there ought to be something more than that. Preaching the glories of the other life should form, constantly, a part of your ministry; but, besides, you should be so full of it that wherever you go you shall carry with you unconsciously

the breath of the other world. I know that a man has been through my garden if he walks from it into my house, by the smell of his raiment, although I have not seen him there, and have not been told that he has been there. I can tell what part of the garden he has been in. I know my heliotropes ; and if he has walked through that avenue along which they grow, and then has come into my presence, he brings something of their fragrance with him, and I discern it.

Now, your soul should dwell in those higher conceptions and loftier realms which belong to the other life, so that there should be the smell of heaven upon your raiment, if I may so say ; so that those who come in contact with you shall have a sense of the infinite life that is to be hereafter.

In the lectures which I have given you, I have, with a purpose, emphasized the necessity of the study of mind, of mental philosophy in its living and practical forms. I have dwelt a great deal in analysis. I have spoken many things to show you how to preach to the human mind. But now, your special danger will be that you will become mere analysts of worldly things ; that you will become specialists in morality and in ethics.

There was a right good reason why the old preachers were afraid to preach morals : not that they are of no value ; but that a man who gives himself largely to preaching moral and ethical relations is apt to lose that scope and power which comes from those relations which are broader and higher. Abiding in the infinite and eternal prepares one to bring to his task of preaching something more than analytical power and secular

narrowness. If you live much in the realm of the spiritual, you have the counterpoise of that part of your mind which allies you to the physical and material. You will need to have the spirit of Christ abiding in your souls in order that you may be what you were ordained to be, consolers and comforters.

THE JOY OF BRINGING COMFORT.

My dear friends, I hope to have an inheritance in heaven, — but not as pay for what I have done in this world. I have had my pay as I have gone along. It has not been in any sense of complacency as to eloquence, or orthodoxy, or anything of that sort; it has been that God, in his providence, gave me a temperament and a training which led me to inspire men with courage, with hope, and with consolation; and I have been blessed to an unusual extent as a comforter. There is nothing sweeter to me, in this world, than to meet one and another, as I do continually, who say, “I never could have gone through my business troubles, Mr. Beecher, but for your comforting preaching”; or, “When sorrow came into my household, my heart was broken; and I owe it to you that I was lifted, as by the voice of angels, into a realm of peace.” I do not care so much for praises, — provided I have them; I do not care so much for the approbation of men, — though that is a great deal; but the sense that God has enabled me to help a soul in its extremity, to find men in their Gethsemanes and comfort them, — this I care a great deal for. If I should die to-morrow, you could not take it from me. I have lived, and what I have done will stand. I have

lived ; and whether my future should be in heaven or in hell, the fact that I have been an instrument of comfort and upbuilding to men cannot be obliterated. I have my reward for that in the joy which comes from the consciousness that I have been permitted to carry the balm of consolation to those who were in trouble. You cannot stop up a perennial fountain.

Now, you must preach so that men who are under burdens and cares shall from your preaching derive stimulus and hope, by which they are helped to go through their various appointed allotments, so that when they come to trouble they will think of you ; so that when they come to anguishful experiences you shall be one who can give an upward direction to their minds, whereby they shall seek outside of themselves for their sources of strength and support. The general drift and tendency of your preaching should be such as to lead men to the fountain of comfort, in the bosom of the Great Infinite. Earth does not grow the herb of consolation. It is a heavenly plant. It blooms near the Throne. It is a part of the tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of nations.

THE PREACHER'S REFUGE.

And you will need these views, dear brethren, for your own sake as well as for your people, — although the ministry is the noblest profession. To be a minister of the gospel, in the true sense of the term, is to be a laborer in the most glorious sphere on earth. And I think it unworthy for ministers to talk about their cares and anxieties and burdens and responsibilities. Ministers do not have as many cares and anxieties as

lawyers and doctors who are worthy of their professions. The ministry is one of the cleanest of horticultural professions. Men in the ministry deal with dirt, to be sure; but it is dirt that brings out flowers all the while.

And yet you will often find the need of supernal comfort in your life-work. Sometimes, in the discharge of your duties, you will find that virtue has gone out of you, when you are obliged, by your sympathy, to take one soul and another and carry them over the flood. It will excite and exhaust you. And you will often be depressed by the sense of being fruitless. And you will sometimes be obliged to stop in the way, from sickness or weakness, when your soul is full of zeal, and see others pass by you in the race.

I have seen, among a cluster of boys that were all exhilaration and power, a little crippled boy, standing and looking on wistfully amidst the whirl and excitement about him.

So, sometimes, you will stand and witness the power and victory of others, and feel pain that by reason of weakness you are deprived of the privilege of joining in the struggle. And there will be a thousand trials, of bodily strength, of mental strain, of perplexities and discouragements and failures and temptations and bereavements,—not only the ordinary lot of man, but trials peculiar to your profession and your work. You will have enough to trouble you in one way and another.

And let me tell you, *fly up!* Do not stay down here where troubles dwell. Go above the dust that rises from the ground, and above the thunder of earthly

noises. Betake yourselves to the realm of eternal peace, to the refuge of God's heart, to the love of Christ's bosom, to the apartment of God's house which the Saviour went before to prepare for you. Escape from your troubles to your eternal home. Do not whine. Do not complain. Do not even think complaint. For, by sorrow and trouble God is preparing you for power and influence. And many of you with feeble tongue will have an abler administration hereafter than you have here. Many of you with feeble hands will hold a scepter that you cannot now hold.

Live for the other life. Endure as seeing Him who is invisible; work by faith; work by hope; work by love; work by courage; work by trust; work by the sweet side of your mind; and so, be like Christ, until you dwell with him.

END OF VOLUME III.

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BV **Beecher, Henry Ward, 1813-1887.**
4211 Yale lectures on preaching. By Henry Ward Beecher.
B43 Delivered before the Theological department of Yale college.
From photographic reports by T. J. Ellinwood. Third
New York: J. B. Ford and company, 1874.

x 328 p. 1874

Laman Beecher lectures on preaching for 1873-74.

228305. I. Title.

1874 4211 B43

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